STUDIES IN
LATE ANTIQUITY AND EARLY ISLAM
20

IBN ʿASĀKIR AND EARLY ISLAMIC HISTORY

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EDITED BY

JAMES E. LINDSAY

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For my mother, Earlene
and in memory of my father, Gordon

CONTENTS

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PREFACE

AT THE NOVEMBER 1995 meeting of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) in Washington, D.C., three young scholars—Marianne Cameron, Paul Cobb and Steven Judd—presented papers based on their research in the *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq* (hereafter *TMD*) by Ibn 'Asākir. As is often the case at academic conferences, the papers were presented in three separate and very disparate panels. At the time I was only acquainted with Marianne Cameron, whom I had met in Cairo where she was conducting research the same year that I was a student in the Center for Arabic Study Abroad (CASA) program at the American University in Cairo. After the four of us learned that we were all working on Ibn 'Asākir, we began to consider the prospects for an Ibn 'Asākir panel at a future MESA conference.

Nothing, of course, came of those conversations for some time. So we were all pleasantly surprised when Paul Cobb began eliciting support and doing the necessary leg-work for a panel entitled "Ibn 'Asākir and Early Islamic History" for the November 1996 MESA meeting in Providence, Rhode Island. Marianne Cameron, Paul Cobb, Fred Donner, Steven Judd, and I presented papers on that panel. Paul Cobb served as panel chair; Larry Conrad served as discussant and provided his customary detailed and insightful comments. In the wake of the panel presentations, both Larry Conrad and Fred Donner suggested that we should try to publish the papers in some collective form. And as the panelists began to revise and expand their conference papers, we sought out a publisher. We are all indebted to Larry Conrad for convincing Darwin Press that a volume of essays on Ibn 'Asākir was a project worth taking on for the *Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam*. It was also Larry who drew our attention to the fact that Suleiman Mourad, who had recently edited and published Ibn 'Asākir's biography of Jesus, should also be asked to contribute to the volume.

New jobs, new babies, and the usual academic excuses too numerous to list account for the delay in the publication of this volume. Nevertheless, the contributors hope that the essays presented here will prove useful as a stimulus to further research on Ibn 'Asākir's *TMD*, which of course will be much easier to consult now that it has recently been edited and published in its entirety. The work has also been made available on CD-Rom, but this version appeared too late for use in any of the studies published here. Taken separately, the individual contributions of the volume serve as guides

through the perils and pitfalls of specific aspects of Ibn 'Asākir's coverage of the early Islamic past. Taken together, they show us how one Crusader-era Muslim envisioned the formative centuries of his own embattled religious and cultural community.

Finally, special thanks is due to our teachers and mentors—Michael D. Bonner, Michael Chamberlain, Lawrence I. Conrad, Fred M. Donner, R. Stephen Humphreys, Tarif Khalidi, Wadad al-Qadi, and Jan Vansina—who encouraged and guided us as we sought to make use of Ibn 'Asākir's vast work in our own studies of early Islamic history. This volume could never have come to fruition without their encouragement and support.

James E. Lindsay
Colorado State University
30 August 2001

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Ibn 'Asākir, His *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq* and its Usefulness for Understanding Early Islamic History

James E. Lindsay

(Colorado State University)

THE MASSIVE *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq* [History of Damascus] by the eminent twelfth-century Damascene scholar, historian and biographer Ibn 'Asākir (d. 571/1176) has long been recognized as an important source for understanding early Islamic history.[1] Ibn 'Asākir began compiling his *TMD* in 529/1134, but only completed it four decades later at the behest of his patron, Nūr al-Dīn (d. 569/1174), the Zangid ruler of Damascus.[2] Modeled after al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's (d. 463/1071) *Ta'rīkh Baghdād* [History of Baghdād],[3] Ibn 'Asākir's *TMD*, with its 10,226 biographical notices, is a veritable gold

[1]Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq*, ed. 'Umar al-'Amrawī and 'Alī Shīrī (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1995–2001) in 80 vols.; henceforth *TMD*. The first 74 volumes contain 10,226 biographical notices. The remaining six volumes contain a variety of indices. A second edition of *TMD* has also been published in Beirut: Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq*, ed. 'Alī 'Āshūr in 76 vols. (Beirut: Dār iḥyā' al-turāth al-'arabī, 2001). Unless otherwise noted all citations to *TMD* will be to the Dār al-fikr edition.

[2]See below, 7–8.

[3]Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rīkh Baghdād aw Madīnat al-Salām*, 14 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khanjī, 1931). See R. Sellheim, art. "al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī" in *EI*², IV, 1111a–1112b. See also Akram Ḍiyā' al-'Umarī, *Mawārid al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī fī Ta'rīkh Baghdād* (Damascus: Dār al-qalam, 1975); and Munir-ud-Din Ahmed, *Muslim Education and the Scholars' Social Status up to the 5th Century Muslim Era (11th Century Christian Era) in the Light of Ta'rīkh Baghdād* (Zurich: Verlag Der Islam, 1968).

mine of information for our understanding of the first five and one-half centuries of Islamic history. Now that it has finally been edited and published in its entirety, scholars will have far greater access to this fundamentally important (and to date little exploited) Syrian source.

This volume of essays seeks to explore the kinds of questions that Ibn 'Asākir can answer for us, and is intended as a contribution to the growing discussion of Ibn 'Asākir's importance for the study of early Islamic history, especially in the context of geographic Syria (Bilād al-Shām). This essay is intended as an introduction to Ibn 'Asākir's *TMD* by addressing three main issues: 1) Ibn 'Asākir's life and the environment in which he compiled his *TMD*; 2) the structure and content of Ibn 'Asākir's *TMD*; and 3) *TMD*'s usefulness for understanding early Islamic history as illustrated by the various contributors to this volume.

Abū l-Qāsim 'Alī ibn 'Asākir

Thiqat al-Dīn Abū l-Qāsim 'Alī ibn Abī Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn Hibat Allāh ibn 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Dimashqī al-Shāfi'ī al-Ḥāfiẓ (499–571/1105–76) is the most famous member of the notable Banū 'Asākir family, which played an important role as Shāfi'ī scholars and judges in the religious and political life of Damascus for nearly two centuries (470/1077 to 660/1261).[4] The home in which Ibn 'Asākir grew up was ardently Sunnī, and as such was understandably hostile to the rival Ismā'īlī Fāṭimid caliphate in Cairo as well as the Ismā'īlī Nizārīs (Assassins) then active in Syria. Like

[4]This is a somewhat expanded version of the biographical sketches found in James E. Lindsay, "Damascene Scholars during the Fāṭimid Period: an Examination of 'Alī b. 'Asākir's *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq*," *Al-Masāq* 7 (1994), 36–38; *idem*, "Ibn 'Asākir as a Preserver of *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'*: the Case of David b. Jesse," *Studia Islamica* 82 (1995), 47–50; *idem*, "Caliphal and Moral Exemplar?: 'Alī Ibn 'Asākir's Portrait of Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya," *Der Islam* 74 (1997), 256–57. It is based on the following biographical notices: 'Imād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī, *Kharīdat al-qaṣr wa-jarīdat al-'aṣr*, ed. Shukrī Fayṣal (Damascus, 1955), 274; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut: Dār ṣādir, 1968), III, 309–11; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ* (Hyderabad: Dā'irat al-ma'ārif al-'uthmānīya, 1955–58), IV, 1328–34; and al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi'īya al-kubrā*, ed. 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Hilw and Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Tanājī (Cairo: Ḥajar li-l-ṭibā'a wa-l-nashr, 1992), IV, 273–78. See also Ḥasan Shumaysānī, *Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn 'Asākir* (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmīya, 1990); Nikita Elisséeff, art. "Ibn 'Asākir" in *EI*², III, 713b–715a; *idem*, *La description de Damas d'Ibn 'Asākir* (Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1959), xvii–xxix; *idem*, *Nūr ad-Dīn: un grand prince musulman de Syrie au temps des croisades (511–569 A.H./1118–1174)* (Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1967), I, 16–18; III, 750–80.

many of the individuals included in his *TMD*, Ibn 'Asākir began his formal education at a very young age, learning the complexities of Arabic grammar, Qur'ān recitation, and the science of *ḥadīth*. We are told that Ibn 'Asākir began the study of *ḥadīth* in 505/1111 at the age of six under the care and direction of his father, al-Ḥasan ibn Hibat Allāh (d. 519/1125),[5] and his elder brother, Hibat Allāh ibn al-Ḥasan (d. 563/1167).[6] He continued his studies of *ḥadīth* with some of the leading Damascene scholars of his day, namely the shaykh Abū Muḥammad ibn al-Akfānī (d. 523 or 524/1129 or 1130)[7] and Jamāl al-Islām 'Alī ibn al-Musallam Abū l-Ḥasan al-Sulamī (d. 533/1139).[8]

As his father had done before him, Ibn 'Asākir embarked upon what would prove to be a formidable life-long quest for religious knowledge (*ṭalab al-'ilm*). In 520/1126, he and his brother Hibat Allāh set out for Baghdad, where he studied jurisprudence (*fiqh*) in the Niẓāmīya under the Shāfi'ī shaykh As'ad al-Mihanī (d. 527/1132).[9] He also studied philosophy there with Ibn Barhān (d. 520/1126), a disciple of al-Ghazālī.[10] In 521/1127 Ibn 'Asākir undertook the pilgrimage to Mecca. While in the Ḥijāz he heard and

[5]*TMD*, XIII, 466–67.

[6]There are only eight entries in *TMD* for men whose names begin with the letter *hā'*. Hibat Allāh ibn al-Ḥasan is not one of them; however, Ibn Manẓūr includes a brief entry for him in his *Mukhtaṣar ta'rīkh Dimashq li-Ibn 'Asākir*, ed. Rūḥīyat al-Khās and Muḥammad Muṭī' al-Ḥāfiẓ (Damascus: Dār al-fikr, 1984–91), XXVII, 66. See also al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, IV, 1328; Elisséeff, *Description*, xx.

[7]Hibat Allāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad, Abū Muḥammad ibn al-Akfānī. There is no entry for Ibn al-Akfānī in *TMD*; however, Ibn Manẓūr does include an entry in his *Mukhtaṣar*, XXVII, 65–66. See also Ibn al-Akfānī, *Dhayl dhayl ta'rīkh mawlid al-'ulamā' wa-wafayātihim*, ed. 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥamad (Riyāḍ: Dār al-'āṣima, 1989); and William M. Brinner, art. "Ibn Ṣaṣra, Ṣaṣarrā" in *EI*², III, 93b; *idem*, "The Banū Ṣaṣra: a Study in the Transmission of a Scholarly Tradition," *Arabica* 8 (1960), 181.

[8]Jamāl al-Islām 'Alī ibn al-Musallim ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Alī Abū l-Ḥasan al-Sulamī al-Dimashqī al-Faqīh al-Shāfi'ī al-Faraḍī. *TMD*, XLIII, 236–38; Shams al-Dīn Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Quḍāt Dimashq*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid (Damascus: al-Majma' al-'ilmī al-'arabī, 1956), 46; Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1991), VI, 168–69. Both Ibn al-Akfānī and al-Sulamī were students of al-Kattānī (d. 466/1074), who was one of Ibn 'Asākir's principal sources. See Steven C. Judd's contribution to this volume, 84–85 below.

[9]Abū l-Fatḥ As'ad ibn Abī l-Faḍl al-Mihanī. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, I, 207–208; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, IV, 203; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, IV, 1288; Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, VI, 132–33; Elisséeff, *Description*, xx.

[10]Abū l-Fatḥ Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Wakīl, known as Ibn Barhān. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, I, 99; Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, VI, 101–102; Elisséeff, *Description*, xx.

gathered a great many *ḥadīth*s from among the resident scholars in Mecca and Medina. He subsequently returned to Baghdad, stopping in al-Kūfa along the way. During his time in Baghdad, Ibn 'Asākir resumed his studies at the Niẓāmīya under such figures as the eminent Ḥanbalī shaykh Sa'd al-Khayr ibn Muḥammad ibn Sahl Abū l-Ḥasan al-Anṣārī (d. 541/1146), another of al-Ghazālī's students.[11] In 525/1130, the year that the *amīr* of Damascus Tāj al-Mulūk Bōrī was assassinated by Nizārī Ismā'īlīs, Ibn 'Asākir returned to Damascus via Mosul where, as was his custom, he studied with the resident scholars there.

We are not told the circumstances of Ibn 'Asākir's marriage, but since his son al-Qāsim was born in 527/1132, he may have married shortly after his return from Baghdad.[12] Two years later (529/1134), Ibn 'Asākir set out again for the lands of the Islamic East. This time he passed through Khurāsān, stopped in Iṣfahān, continued on to Transoxiana, and stayed in Marw. It was on this journey that Ibn 'Asākir began compiling his *TMD*, a project that would occupy him for the rest of his days. Certainly, the most influential scholar Ibn 'Asākir encountered during his time there was 'Abd al-Karīm al-Sam'ānī (d. 562/1166), an outstanding *ḥāfiẓ* in his own right and author of more than 40 works, including his own important biographical dictionary of eastern scholars entitled *Kitāb al-ansāb* [Book of Genealogies].[13] The two men became friends, fellow students, and traveling companions, journeying to Nīshāpūr and Herāt together in their constant quest for religious knowledge. In 533/1139, Ibn 'Asākir returned to Baghdad, and two years later to Damascus.

To summarize Ibn 'Asākir's travels, between the years 520/1126 and 535/1141 he made two exhaustive trips to the centers of Islamic learning in his day: Baghdad, the Ḥijāz, al-Kūfa, and the lands of the Islamic East—Khurāsān, Iṣfahān, Transoxiana, Marw, Nīshāpūr, and Herāt. Throughout his extensive sojourns in these centers, Ibn 'Asākir studied with hundreds of scholars (al-Dhahabī tells us that Ibn 'Asākir's teachers numbered 1,300 shaykhs and some 80 women),[14] collected a great number of *ḥadīth*s and other

[11] Elisséeff, *Description*, xx.

[12] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, IV, 1367–70.

[13] *TMD*, XXXVI, 447–49; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, IV, 1316–19. Whereas Ibn 'Asākir's *TMD* is arranged alphabetically according to birth name (*ism*), al-Sam'ānī's *Kitāb al-ansāb* is arranged according to *nisba*; see al-Sam'ānī, *Kitāb al-ansāb* (Beirut: Dār al-jinān, 1998).

[14] Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, IV, 1328. Al-Dhahabī would have had access to

materials for his *TMD*, and returned to his home in Damascus a *ḥāfiẓ*, an appellation conferred only on those extraordinary and pious individuals who had committed tremendous amounts of religious literature to memory and were held in the highest esteem among the religious scholars of their day. The testimony of his friend and traveling companion 'Abd al-Karīm al-Sam'ānī was that "Abū l-Qāsim is a *ḥāfiẓ* of unquestioned trustworthiness".[15] One of his teachers during his sojourn in Baghdad, the Ḥanbalī shaykh Sa'd al-Khayr al-Anṣārī, had high praise for him as well, saying that he had "never seen another like Ibn 'Asākir".[16]

Given the state of transportation in the sixth/twelfth-century Middle East, Ibn 'Asākir's extensive travels undoubtedly involved a great deal of effort as well as discomfort. Such travels were not in any way out of the ordinary, however, and were in fact very much what one would expect from any devoted medieval Muslim scholar. In fact, such travels were in many ways a required rite of passage among scholars if one hoped to achieve real prestige (especially that of a *ḥāfiẓ*) within what had become a far-flung network of scholars in the medieval Islamic world spanning from Spain in the west to India and Central Asia in the east. After his return to Damascus in 535/1141, Ibn 'Asākir was content to remain in the city of his birth for the remainder of his life. Although he continued to pursue his study of the religious sciences and to collect materials for his *TMD*, Ibn 'Asākir did not limit his focus to these endeavors alone; he also tried his hand at poetry. In fact, his contemporary 'Imād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī includes him among the "scholar-poets" of Damascus in his compendium of poets, *Kharīdat al-qaṣr wa-jarīdat al-'aṣr* [A Pearl Well-Hid Away, on the Poets of the Day].[17]

Ibn 'Asākir's opportunities in Damascus were not limited to purely scholarly and literary pursuits, however. He also played an active role in the political life of his native city. As noted above, the Banū 'Asākir had been one of the more influential Shāfi'ī families in Damascus since the second half of the fifth/eleventh century. By the time Nūr al-Dīn occupied Damascus in 549/1154, the Banū 'Asākir had held positions of influence there for nearly a

this information from Ibn 'Asākir's *Mu'jam al-shuyūkh*, now accessible in a three-volume edition by Wafā' Taqī l-Dīn (Damascus: Dār al-bashā'ir, 2000).

[15] *Ibid.*, IV, 1330.

[16] *Ibid.*, IV, 1331.

[17] 'Imād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī, *Kharīdat al-qaṣr*, 274. I thank Shawkat M. Toorawa for alerting me to Michael Cooperson's felicitous rendition of this title.

century. Hence, as the family's leading figure, Ibn 'Asākir was Nūr al-Dīn's logical choice as an intellectual and religious ally in his ambitious program of *jihād*. The prestige and influence of the Banū 'Asākir in Damascus is evidenced in part by the fact that Ibn 'Asākir's father, the learned grammarian and Shāfi'ī legal scholar (*faqīh*) al-Ḥasan ibn Hibat Allāh ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Ḥusayn Abū Muḥammad (d. 519/1125), had married into the prestigious Banū l-Qurashī in Damascus.[18] In fact, al-Ḥasan's father-in-law and Ibn 'Asākir's maternal grandfather, Yaḥyā ibn 'Alī ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Qāḍī al-Muntakhab al-Zakī Abū l-Mufaḍḍal al-Qurashī (d. 534/1139), was Chief Judge in Damascus (*qāḍī Dimashq*).[19] His appointment to this position marked the beginning of a Qurashī hold on the office through three generations, until his grandson 'Alī resigned in 555/1160. In short, Ibn 'Asākir's maternal grandfather, uncle and cousin held the post in succession.

Since Ibn 'Asākir's maternal uncle, Sulṭān ibn Yaḥyā ibn 'Alī ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz Zayn al-Quḍāt Abū l-Makarram al-Qurashī al-Dimashqī, died before his father (530/1135–36), he was obviously in no position to succeed him as Chief Judge. He did, however, assist his father as a deputy *qāḍī*, and was a preacher (*wā'iẓ*) as well as a *muftī* (one who delivered formal legal opinions).[20] Another of Ibn 'Asākir's maternal uncles, Yaḥyā's other son Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā ibn 'Alī ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Qāḍī al-Muntakhab Abū l-Ma'ālī al-Qurashī al-Dimashqī (d. 537/1142–43), succeeded him as Chief Judge.[21] Ibn 'Asākir's maternal cousin and contemporary, Zakī l-Dīn Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn al-Qāḍī al-Muntakhab Abī l-Ma'ālī Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā al-Qurashī (d. 564/1168), succeeded his father as Chief Judge, an office he held until he asked Nūr al-Dīn to relieve him of his duties in 555/1160. Nūr al-Dīn obliged him and appointed Kamāl al-Dīn al-Shahrazūrī, who

[18] *TMD*, XIII, 466–67.

[19] *TMD*, LXIV, 341–43. Ibn 'Asākir reports: "My Grandfather, Abū l-Mufaḍḍal al-Qāḍī, died the eve of Monday 25 Rabī' I 534 [1139], at the time of the last *al-'ishā'* prayers. He was buried Monday afternoon at the al-Qadam Mosque." Yaḥyā ibn 'Alī was a student of 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Kattānī (d. 466/1074) as well; see *TMD*, XXXVI, 62–65; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, III, 1170–71; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Quḍāt Dimashq*, 44–45.

[20] *TMD*, XXI, 70–72; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Quḍāt Dimashq*, 45.

[21] Ibn 'Asākir records no biography for him; however, Ibn Manẓūr preserves an entry for him in his *Mukhtaṣar*, XXIII, 337. See also Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Quḍāt Dimashq*, 45. Ibn al-Qalānisī reports that al-Qāḍī al-Muntakhab Abū l-Ma'ālī Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā died on a Wednesday in mid-Rabī' I 537/October 1142, and was buried in the al-Qadam mosque. His son 'Alī succeeded him as *qāḍī*; Ibn al-Qalānisī, *Dhayl ta'rīkh Dimashq*, ed. H.F. Amedroz (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1908), 277.

held the Chief Judgeship until his death in 572/1176–77. After his resignation 'Alī moved to Baghdad, whence he later made the pilgrimage. He returned to Baghdad in 563/1167–68, where he resided until his death one year later.[22]

During the sixth/twelfth century three men vied successfully for political control of Syria: the ruler of Mosul and Aleppo, the *atabeg* Zangī (d. 541/1146); his son Nūr al-Dīn (d. 570/1174); and Nūr al-Dīn's subordinate, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (d. 589/1193).[23] After Zangī's death, his realm was divided among his two eldest sons; Sayf al-Dīn Ghāzī (d. 544/1149) took Mosul and al-Jazīra, while Nūr al-Dīn took Aleppo. As is often the case with dynastic successions, Nūr al-Dīn's leadership was immediately threatened, by the Franks at Edessa as well as by the Börids of Damascus in central Syria. But freed from his father's obligations in the east, Nūr al-Dīn was able to devote himself fully to the consolidation of his position in Syria. After nearly a decade of conflict, Nūr al-Dīn had subdued Edessa, and in Ṣafar 549/April 1154 he entered Damascus with the collaboration of the people of the city in a bloodless conquest. From Damascus, Nūr al-Dīn ruled Syria's Muslim districts for the next two decades. Under Nūr al-Dīn, Ibn 'Asākir's career would truly flourish.

Ever the astute politician, Nūr al-Dīn sought out Ibn 'Asākir as an ally shortly after occupying the city. The alliance that developed between the two men proved mutually beneficial. Ibn 'Asākir was particularly concerned to preserve what he considered the proper Sunnī character of Islam, and did so as an eager and effective advocate of Nūr al-Dīn's *jihād* against the internal

[22] Ibn al-Qalānisī reports that on a Thursday at the beginning of Ṣafar, 'Alī submitted a request to Nūr al-Dīn asking that he be relieved of his duties and replaced with someone else. Nūr al-Dīn obliged, and replaced him with Kamāl al-Dīn al-Shahrazūrī. The Shahrazūrī family played important roles in the political and religious life of Damascus in the sixth/twelfth and seventh/thirteenth centuries. See Ibn al-Qalānisī, *Dhayl*, 359–60. Ibn Ṭūlūn (*Quḍāt Dimashq*, 46) reports that 'Alī was dismissed from his post. This position seems to be supported by Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, IV, 242 (*'azala [Nūr al-Dīn] Zakī l-Dīn 'an al-ḥukm, wa-tawallahu Kamāl al-Dīn*). Ibn 'Asākir records no biography for 'Alī. For accounts of Kamāl al-Dīn al-Shahrazūrī, see Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Quḍāt Dimashq*, 47–48; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, IV, 241–45.

[23] For an excellent treatment of the Crusades in the Near East, see Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999). See also P.M. Holt, *The Age of the Crusades: the Near East from the Eleventh Century to 1517* (London: Longman, 1986). For a comprehensive and detailed discussion of this period see Nikita Elisséeff, *Nūr ad-Dīn*; see also *idem*, art. "Nūr al-Dīn" in *EI* [2], VIII, 127b–133a.

and external enemies of the Zangid state in Syria, whether Shīʿī or Crusader. Long before Ibn ʿAsākir's alliance with Nūr al-Dīn, it was clear that he, like his patron, harbored no Shīʿī sympathies. His early training and upbringing stuck with him throughout his whole life, for he remained an ardent Shāfiʿī in matters of jurisprudence and Ashʿarī in matters of theology.[24]

For his part, Ibn ʿAsākir found Nūr al-Dīn to be a very generous patron. Nūr al-Dīn's policy was characterized in general by strong support for Sunnī scholars and *madrasas* on the one hand, and the consequent marginalization of anyone who might harbor Shīʿī sentiments on the other. A key building block in Nūr al-Dīn's policy was his construction of a *dār al-ḥadīth* (also known as *dār al-sunna*, a school specifically established for the purpose of the study of *ḥadīth*) in Damascus. Henceforth, under Ibn ʿAsākir's direction, Nūr al-Dīn's *dār al-ḥadīth* became the institutional center for his *jihād* against the enemies of Sunnī Islam throughout his realm.[25] To this end, Ibn ʿAsākir composed two important works: 1) *Arbaʿūn fī l-ijtihād fī iqāmāt al-jihād* [Forty Arguing for the Pursuit of *Jihād*], a collection of forty *ḥadīths* exalting the virtues of *jihād*, which in the circumstances of the sixth/twelfth century meant a struggle against the opponents of the Sunnī regime, whether Shīʿī or Crusader; and 2) *Faḍl ʿAsqalān* [The Virtues of ʿAsqalān], an exhortation to Muslims to retake the coastal town of ʿAsqalān, which the Crusaders, under the leadership of Baldwin III, had captured in 548/1153.[26] But most important for our purposes, it was under Nūr al-Dīn's patronage and with his encouragement that Ibn ʿAsākir completed his *TMD*, begun in 529/1134.[27]

[24]See Justin MacCarthy, *The Theology of al-Ashʿarī* (Beirut: Imprimerie catholique, 1953), 145–210, for a summary "translation" of Ibn ʿAsākir's treatise in defense of Ashʿarism, *Tabyīn kadhib al-muftarī fīmā nusiba ilā l-Imām Abī l-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī* [The Exposure of the Calumniator's Lying Concerning What Has Been Imputed to the Imām Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī].

[25]For an excellent discussion of the ideology and propaganda of Nūr al-Dīn's *jihād* see Emmanuel Sivan, *L'Islam et la Croisade: idéologie et propagande dans les réactions musulmanes aux Croisades* (Paris: A. Maisonneuve, 1968), 59–92; Elisséeff, *Nūr ad-Dīn*, III, 704–81.

[26]Elisséeff, "Ibn ʿAsākir," 714a. Al-ʿAmrawī and Shīrī (*TMD*, I, 20–24) list 105 works attributed to Ibn ʿAsākir. See Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Karīm Ḥalwānī, *Ibn ʿAsākir wa-dawruhu fī l-jihād ḍidda al-ṣalībīyīn fī ʿahd al-dawlatayn al-nūrīya wa-l-ayyūbīya* (Damascus: Dār al-fiḍāʾ, 1991).

[27]See Fred M. Donner's and Suleiman A. Mourad's contributions to this volume, which address Ibn ʿAsākir's anti-Shīʿī and anti-Crusader sentiments respectively.

Near the end of his days Ibn ʿAsākir witnessed his patron's death in the year 570/1174 as well as Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's entry into Damascus in Rabīʿ I 571/October 1175. Shortly thereafter, on 11 Rajab 571/25 January 1176, Ibn ʿAsākir went the way of all flesh. His prestige as a leading scholar of his time, as well as the importance of his contributions to the religious and political life of Damascus, is evidenced in part by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's presence at his funeral ceremony, during which he was laid to rest alongside his father and other members of his family in the Bāb al-Ṣaghīr cemetery.

The Structure and Content of Ibn ʿAsākir's *TMD*

Little has been done to date to systematically exploit Ibn ʿAsākir's *TMD*.[28] The reasons for this are two: 1) the sheer size of the text—10,226 entries contained in nineteen stout volumes of manuscript—has made it rather daunting to work with; and 2) until recently the text has existed almost exclusively in manuscripts housed in Damascus, Istanbul, Marrakesh, Rabat, and Tunis.[29] An early eighteenth-century copy of *TMD* housed in the Ẓāhirīya Library in Damascus is the most complete manuscript available at the moment. There are a few spots where ink has been spilled on the manuscript, as well as the inevitable occasional sloppy sections, but the various copyists' hands are usually quite legible. A xerographic reproduction of the Ẓāhirīya manuscript was published in Amman in the late 1980s. While the quality of the xerography is for the most part fairly good, it is at times rather difficult to read. Fortunately, *TMD* has recently been edited and published in 80 volumes. In addition, various portions of the text have been edited and published as separate volumes. There is an incomplete abridgment edited by ʿAbd al-Qādir Badrān and Aḥmad ʿUbayd, the Damascus editing project began in 1951, and a number of individual volumes have also been published.

In addition, the prolific lexicographer Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1311) compiled an important abridgement of *TMD* entitled *Mukhtaṣar taʾrīkh Dimashq li-Ibn ʿAsākir* [Abridgment of Ibn ʿAsākir's History of Damascus].[30] Its principal value for our purposes is that it can be employed to fill in some of the lacunae in *TMD* as well as to clarify some of the problematical renderings of narrative

[28]See Appendix B for a listing of secondary works which are based, in part, on Ibn ʿAsākir's *TMD*.

[29]See *TMD*, I, 36, for a listing of the manuscripts al-ʿAmrawī and Shīrī used in compiling the Beirut edition. See Appendix A for a discussion of the publication history of *TMD*, as well as a complete listing of the published editions of various sections of *TMD*.

[30]See above, 3 n. 6.

reports and *ḥadīths* in the Dār al-fikr and other editions. However, it does not resolve all the potential problems the researcher faces when using *TMD*. Although Ibn Manẓūr does fill in certain lacunae, his practice of excluding many of the variant *ḥadīths* and narrative reports found in *TMD* can at times be frustrating. Moreover, since Ibn Manẓūr only provides the name of the person to whom a narrative report or *ḥadīth* is attributed, he is of no help at all for clarifying the lengthy chains of transmitters (*isnāds*) with which Ibn 'Asākir begins nearly every narrative report or *ḥadīth*. Nevertheless, Ibn Manẓūr's is an extremely valuable abridgment and one should not use *TMD* without consulting it as well.

Finally, Ibn al-'Adīm's (d. 660/1262) *Bughyat al-ṭalab fī ta'rīkh Ḥalab* [Everything Desirable about the History of Aleppo][31] merits attention as an important Syrian source modeled on the Khaṭīb's *Ta'rīkh Baghdād* and Ibn 'Asākir's *TMD*. Unfortunately, since the extant text is far from complete (2,081 biographical notices in ten of an original 40 volumes), it offers fewer possibilities for clarifying lacunae and other issues in *TMD* than does Ibn Manẓūr's *Mukhtaṣar*. Nevertheless, as David Morray has demonstrated, Ibn al-'Adīm's *Bughya* is a local history that can shed important light on the social history of northern Syria, especially under the Ayyūbids.[32]

Ibn 'Asākir states in his introduction that his purpose in composing *TMD* was to preserve the memory of the city and to protect this legacy from distortion.[33] As such, his *TMD* is part of the long-established Syrian literary tradition that was designed in part to extol the virtues (*faḍā'il*) of a given

[31]The extant portions have recently been edited and published in ten volumes, with an index comprising the eleventh volume; Ibn al-'Adīm, *Bughyat al-ṭalab fī ta'rīkh Ḥalab*, ed. Suhayl Zakkār (Damascus: Dār al-ba'th, 1988); *idem*, *Everything Desirable about the History of Aleppo* (facsimile), ed. Fuat Sezgin (Frankfurt: Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science, 1986–90).

[32]David Morray, *An Ayyūbid Notable and His World: Ibn al-'Adīm and Aleppo as Portrayed in his Biographical Dictionary of People Associated with the City* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994). See especially 20–121 for summary translations of the 65 biographies of Ibn al-'Adīm's contemporaries and near contemporaries in the extant volumes of his *Bughya* on which Morray's study is based. See Nuha N.N. Khoury, "The Autobiography of Ibn al-'Adīm as told to Yāqūt al-Rūmī," *Edebiyât* 7 (1996), 289–311. See also R. Stephen Humphreys, "Towards a History of Aleppo and Damascus in the Early Middle Ages, 635–1260 C.E.," *Islamic Area Studies Working Paper Series*, no. 2 (Tokyo: Islamic Area Studies Project, 1998), 1–14, for a discussion of his project to "reconstruct, in as many dimensions as possible, the evolution of society in Damascus and Aleppo between the Arab Muslim conquest (635 C.E.) and the Mongol invasion (1260 C.E.)" [2].

[33]*TMD*, I, 4.

locale, especially Jerusalem and Damascus—what Franz Rosenthal calls "theological local history".[34] One very important way to preserve its proper and undistorted memory was to demonstrate Damascus' importance in the long and ancient history of Syria. To this end, Ibn 'Asākir casts his net far beyond the city proper and focuses his attention on individuals from the whole of Syria, many of whom hailed from Aleppo and Ḥimṣ to the north as well as from such coastal towns as Beirut, Tyre, Sidon and 'Asqalān. A smaller number are linked to Jerusalem, a small and rather isolated shrine-city in early Islamic times. From 492/1099, of course, it was in Crusader hands. In short, Ibn 'Asākir's *TMD* is a massive biographical dictionary devoted primarily to thousands of Muslim religious scholars, government officials, and political actors, of even minor significance, who hailed from, resided in, or merely passed through Syria or her capital and who played a morally exemplary role of some sort there during the first five and one-half Islamic centuries. In addition, Ibn 'Asākir incorporates a great deal of material from the pre-Islamic tradition of prophet stories (*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*). Like his model the Khaṭīb and his "successor" Ibn al-'Adīm, Ibn 'Asākir begins his *TMD* with a lengthy discussion of the virtues of the city as well as a detailed topographical description of the city and its environs, including extensive discussions of the layout of the city, the Umayyad and other mosques, churches, synagogues, markets, water canals, and the outlying areas of the city.[35] Beginning with the prophet Muḥammad (Ibn 'Asākir lists the Prophet under Aḥmad), Ibn 'Asākir then presents his collection of biographies.[36]

There are six basic features of Ibn 'Asākir's *TMD* that not only contribute to its great importance for early Islamic history, but also distinguish it in some ways from its model *Ta'rīkh Baghdād* (and to certain extents other biographical dictionaries).[37] It should be noted here, however, that despite its

[34]Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 2nd rev. ed. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), 169. See 104 n. 12 below, in Paul M. Cobb's contribution to this volume.

[35]See Nikita Elisseéff's French translation of Ibn 'Asākir's topographical description of the city, *La description de Damas*. For an English translation of the topographical description in the Khaṭīb's *Ta'rīkh Baghdād*, see Jacob Lassner, *The Topography of Baghdād in the Early Middle Ages: Texts and Studies* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970). For a listing of the contents of the topographical introduction to Ibn al-'Adīm's *Bughya*, see Morray, *Ayyubid Notable*, 202–205. See also Marius Canard, "Quelques observations sur l'Introduction Géographique de la *Bughyat al-Ṭalab* de Kamāl al-Dīn de Alep," *Annales de l'Institut d'études orientales* 15 (1957), 41–53.

[36]*TMD*, III–LXX.

[37]There are a number of studies that address the importance of the various types

massive size there are significant lacunae in the manuscripts of Ibn 'Asākir's *TMD* as well as of the Khaṭīb's *Ta'rīkh Baghdād* that have come down to us.[38] Hence any conclusions drawn from a comparison of the two biographical dictionaries can only be provisional.

1. *TMD*'s most obvious feature is its massive bulk, which promises to afford the researcher a number of sources (at the very least variant versions of existing sources) that may otherwise have been lost or remained inaccessible to scholars. All of the papers in this volume touch on this issue to some degree, but Marianne Engle Cameron's and Steven C. Judd's contributions address it most systematically: Cameron in her analysis of Ibn 'Asākir's and al-Ṭabarī's use of Sayf ibn 'Umar, Judd in his analysis of Ibn 'Asākir's sources for the late Umayyad period.[39] Both conclude that Ibn 'Asākir was a faithful transmitter of the sources to which he had access. In addition, Judd importantly observes that while Ibn 'Asākir's biographical structure is modeled after al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's *Ta'rīkh Baghdād* and is familiar to anyone who has used later biographical dictionaries, it is a departure from the narrative strategy employed by earlier compilers. He argues that not only did Ibn 'Asākir faithfully transmit this earlier material, he carefully refashioned it in order to fit it into the narrative structure he employed in most of his scholarly biographies.

of biographical dictionaries to the Islamic historiographical tradition. While many of these studies refer to *TMD* as an important example of the genre, none engage *TMD* as systematically as do the contributors to this volume. See Malake Abiad, "Origine et développement des dictionnaires biographiques arabes," *Bullétin d'études orientales* 31 (1979), 7–15; Paul Auchterlonie, *Arabic Biographical Dictionaries: a Summary Guide and Bibliography* (Durham: Middle East Libraries Committee, 1987); Michael Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography: the Heirs of the Prophet in the Age of al-Ma'mūn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1–23; H.A.R. Gibb, "Islamic Biographical Literature," in Bernard Lewis and P.M. Holt, eds., *Historians of the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 54–58; Ibrahim Hafsi, "Recherches sur le genre 'Ṭabaqāt' dans la littérature arabe," *Arabica* 23 (1976), 228–65; Humphreys, *Islamic History*, 185–208; Tarif Khalidi, "Islamic Biographical Dictionaries: a Preliminary Assessment," *Muslim World* 63 (1973), 53–65; Morray, *Ayyubid Notable*, 1–19, 151–98; Wadād al-Qāḍī, "The Biographical Dictionaries: Inner Structure and Cultural Significance," in George N. Atiyeh, ed., *The Book in the Islamic World: the Written Word and Communication in the Middle East* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 93–122; Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography*, 88–94.

[38]See Appendix C for a listing of various lacunae in *TMD*.

[39]See also Ahmad Shboul, "Change and Continuity in Early Islamic Damascus," *ARAM* 6 (1994), 67–102, especially 67–78 for a discussion of Ibn 'Asākir's sources.

2. With respect to chronological scope, Ibn 'Asākir presents a sweeping vision of Syrian history and of Syria as the special—even "sacred"—scene for God working in history. Ibn 'Asākir does not limit himself to "Islamic" personalities active in Syria since the early first/seventh century. As noted above, he devotes considerable attention to Syria's pre-Islamic sacred figures, beginning with the first man, Adam, and provides biographical notices for at least 29 of the pre-Islamic sacred figures of the Islamic prophet stories (*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*) tradition. In fact, his lives of these pre-Islamic sacred figures constitute some of his lengthiest biographies.[40] His biography of Jesus, which is the basis for Suleiman A. Mourad's contribution to this volume, occupies 178 pages in the Beirut edition.[41] Obviously, neither the Khaṭīb nor other non-Syrian local historians could claim anything close to the same degree of privileged pre-Islamic sacred status for their lands that Ibn 'Asākir and his predecessors and successors could for Syria.

3. A key element in Ibn 'Asākir's biographical entries is his rigorous use of a full *isnād* or chain of authorities for nearly every narrative report and *ḥadīth* that he relates. The Khaṭīb includes *isnāds* in his biographical entries as well; however, he does not employ them as rigorously as Ibn 'Asākir. The *isnāds* in *TMD* may yield keen insights into the process of the production and reproduction of religious knowledge in early Islamic history, for they ostensibly comprise a chain of transmitters that stems from the report's originator down to the person from whom Ibn 'Asākir heard it himself or in whose book he read it. A careful examination of these *isnāds* enables us to reconstruct the possible origins of certain reports and their transmission history, as well as scholarly networks for a number of centuries.[42]

Since both Ibn 'Asākir and the Khaṭīb were renowned *ḥuffāẓ* (sing. *ḥāfiẓ*) and *muḥaddiths*, the bulk of their biographies understandably treat their fellow religious scholars in Syria and Iraq respectively. Ibn 'Asākir is particularly interested in those religious scholars who either were natives or residents of Damascus or who merely passed through the city and its environs during the first five and one-half centuries of Islamic history. Ibn 'Asākir provides biographical entries for many, though by no means all, of the personalities who appear in his myriad *isnāds* and who had some connection,

[40]See Appendix D for a listing of the pre-Islamic sacred figures' biographies preserved in *TMD*.

[41]*TMD*, LXVII, 347–524; see also *idem*, *Sīrat al-sayyid al-Masīḥ li-Ibn 'Asākir al-Dimashqī*, ed. Suleiman A. Mourad (Amman: Dār al-shurūq, 1996), 23–284.

[42]See Marianne Engle Cameron's and Steven C. Judd's contributions to this volume.

however brief, to Syria. In addition, Ibn ʿAsākir cites his model, the Khaṭīb, in many of his entries, especially for those individuals who came to Damascus from the east. This may represent a potential source bias in *TMD*, for Ibn ʿAsākir includes a seemingly disproportionate number of scholars of eastern—particularly Iranian—origin, a phenomenon that at first appears odd in a collection of biographies called the *History of Damascus*.[43] Many of these eastern scholars were not long-term residents of the city. Often their only reason for being in Damascus in the first place was that they were passing through the city as pilgrims on their way to Mecca. Ibn ʿAsākir does not always give us the exact dates of these eastern scholars' stay in Damascus. Sometimes he merely gives us a two- or three-line entry comprising the man's name and a statement that he came to Damascus on the pilgrimage. Occasionally he provides us with a bit more information, telling us that the subject came to Damascus on the pilgrimage and studied with (*samiʿa ʿan*), transmitted *ḥadīth* on the authority of (*ḥaddatha ʿan*), or related some sort of religious knowledge on the authority of (*rawā ʿan*) certain individuals.

There are some instances, however, as in Ibn ʿAsākir's biography of the Khaṭīb, where he actually does tell us when certain individuals were in the city, the length of their stay, and if their residence there was on their way to the Ḥijāz or on their return journey. In such instances Ibn ʿAsākir often provides us with more extensive biographies as well as more detailed information concerning the person's teachers, students, and/or the specific *ḥadīths* he transmitted while in Damascus. Since Damascus was a major stopping point along the pilgrimage routes from the east, we should expect that most of the men who passed through Damascus on their way to Mecca were more than overnight travelers. They would have had to remain in Damascus while they waited for the pilgrimage caravan to assemble, a process that could easily take several weeks or months.[44]

Not only was the Khaṭīb's *Taʾrīkh Baghdād* a model as well as a source for Ibn ʿAsākir's biographies of eastern scholars, the Khaṭīb proved to be an excellent source for Ibn ʿAsākir for a large number of Syrian scholars as well, even for those Syrian scholars who spent no time in Iraq and hence were not included in the *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*. This material was often cited on the authority of the Damascene ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Kattānī (d. 466/1074), who

[43]See Chapter Nine, "Iranian Diaspora," in Richard W. Bulliet, *Islam: the View from the Edge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 145–68.

[44]We find very little mention of Maghribī or Egyptian personalities, since their pilgrimage routes would not have taken them near Damascus.

was a nearly exact contemporary of the Khaṭīb and was one of Ibn ʿAsākir's principal sources. Since the Khaṭīb spent much of the 450s/1060s in Syria, principally in Damascus, Jerusalem and Tyre, he was well-acquainted with a great many of the leading Syrian scholars. In fact, he spent eight years lecturing in the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus (451–59/1059–67). However, he fell out of the good graces of the Fāṭimid governor of Damascus in 459/1067, ostensibly for upsetting Shīʿī sensibilities in the city. Fortunately, the governor allowed him to leave the city and take up residence in Tyre, where he continued his studies and teaching until he returned to Baghdad via Tripoli and Aleppo three years later (462/1070).[45]

Since Ibn ʿAsākir relied heavily on the Khaṭīb's work for his own, both as a model and as a source, one might expect to find extensive wholesale borrowings from it. However, this appears not to be the case. Ibn ʿAsākir primarily cites the Khaṭīb in the latter section of a given entry, where he includes narrative reports (*akhbār*) cited on the authority of various scholars who ostensibly had direct knowledge of them. Often these narrative reports include a person's death date and birth date, as well as the names of some of his teachers and students. Understandably, Ibn ʿAsākir draws on the Khaṭīb when recounting a given scholar's travels in search of religious knowledge, especially when those travels were to such eastern cities as Nīshāpūr, Iṣfahān, Balkh or Rayy. Moreover, when Ibn ʿAsākir records a person's Baghdādī teachers or students, he often lists only a few, frequently omitting a full three-fourths of the person's teachers or students listed by the Khaṭīb. I suspect that he regarded these few Baghdādī scholars as more prestigious than those he omitted. However, only a careful comparative examination of the two texts will indicate whether there is any validity to this supposition.

4. Of particular importance for Ibn ʿAsākir's usefulness for our understanding of early Islamic history is that roughly one-third of his biographies can be dated to the Rāshidūn and Umayyad periods (c. AD 600–750), including very lengthy biographies of the four Rāshidūn (the "rightly guided") caliphs, a great many Companions and contemporaries of the Prophet, and to all appearances nearly every member of the Umayyad household and their clients. In addition, Ibn ʿAsākir includes quite a few biographies for government officials and religious scholars from the early ʿAbbāsid period, as well as

[45]*TMD*, V, 31–41. See also Sellheim, "al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī," 1111b; and Fedwa Malti-Douglas, "Controversy and its Effects in the Biographical Tradition of Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī," *Studia Islamica* 46 (1977), 115–32.

a number of Syrian poets.[46] Ibn 'Asākir's inclusion of so many government officials and non-scholarly biographies for the early Islamic period may in part be an artifact of his sources as well. After all, there are a number of texts dealing with government officials for the early period, while these kinds of texts effectively disappear after the 250s/860s. Nevertheless, one needs to ask why he includes so many of these kinds of biographies in a collection devoted primarily to religious scholars. Before we turn our attention to this important question in the context in our discussion of *TMD*'s usefulness for understanding early Islamic history, there are two final comments that need to be made regarding the structure and content of Ibn 'Asākir's *TMD*.

5. The length of the biographies that Ibn 'Asākir records for us ranges anywhere from two or three lines for rather obscure figures to as many as 30 to 40 pages for some of the more famous personalities. His biography of Muḥammad is understandably the lengthiest, and constitutes two complete volumes.[47] His biographies of the four Rāshidūn caliphs constitute a single volume each, while his biographies of some of the pre-Islamic sacred figures, as well as some of the Umayyad caliphs, range from *ca.* 75 to nearly 200 pages.[48] These lengthy biographies, however, are clearly the exception. In fact, most of his biographies range from one to ten pages. Even his biography of the Khaṭīb is only eleven pages.[49]

6. Ibn 'Asākir includes biographies of 226 women in his *TMD* and, like the Khaṭīb and many others, Ibn 'Asākir places his biographies of women in a separate section at the very end of his last volume.[50] Most of these biographies date to the Rāshidūn and Umayyad periods, which is understandable

[46]Ibn 'Asākir's inclusion of so many poets as well as a considerable amount of poetry in his biographical entries is not surprising, considering what we find in other biographical dictionaries, coupled with the fact that Ibn 'Asākir fancied himself a poet. However, it is yet another departure from his model, the Khaṭīb, who devotes less attention to poetry in his *Ta'rīkh Baghdād*.

[47]*TMD*, III and IV.

[48]See Appendices D and E for complete citations for Ibn 'Asākir's biographies of these figures.

[49]*TMD*, V, 31–41.

[50]*TMD*, LXIX, 5–298; LXX, 3–296. See also Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq: tarājim al-nisā'*, ed. Sukayna al-Shihābī (Damascus: Majma' al-lugha al-'arabīya, 1982), which only has biographies for 196 women. It should be noted that whereas Ibn 'Asākir groups these biographies of women at the end of his last volume, Ibn Manẓūr simply orders them alphabetically throughout his *Mukhtaṣar*, albeit at the end of the section for the appropriate letter.

given the important role that Syria and Damascus played in these periods. However, this simply may be an artifact of his sources as well. Most of these 226 biographies are quite short. Yet, in spite of their terseness they may prove useful for enhancing our understanding of the roles of women actors and scholars in early Islamic Syria as well as in reconstructing some of the marriage alliances among the notable and scholarly families of Damascus. In addition, Ibn 'Asākir includes biographies of six pre-Islamic sacred women: Eve,[51] Sarah,[52] Hagar,[53] Mary,[54] Raḥma (Job's wife),[55] and Bilqīs (the Queen of Sheba).[56]

TMD's Usefulness for Understanding Early Islamic History

A theme that emerges quite clearly in the papers that follow is that Ibn 'Asākir was far more than a mere compiler or collator of the material available to him. Moreover, it appears that his choice of subject, the content, and the narrative structure of his biographies, extending from Adam to his recently deceased contemporaries, reflects a chronological, thematic, and even moralistic continuity in his understanding of Syria's history. But Ibn 'Asākir's desire to preserve his vision of a proper understanding of the Syrian past exceeded mere antiquarianism or local particularism. His apparent intent is to demonstrate the pivotal role that Damascus specifically and Syria more broadly have played in his understanding of the past in which God has intervened and acted at times to reward the righteous and punish the wicked. Now, such a vision of the past is certainly not unique, and it parallels that of his many contemporaries and myriad predecessors and successors, whether Muslim, Christian or Jewish. Nevertheless, his vision of Syria's past enabled him to draw on the disparate sources available to him and to include a wide array of actors in this endeavor (many of whom were not fellow religious scholars) in order to construct as completely as his sources allowed a vision of that past that speaks to the virtues of Syria (*faḍā'il al-Shām*), including its privileged place as God's preferred theater of action.

Precisely *how* he constructed that vision of the past remains something of a mystery. A detailed analysis of *TMD* in its entirety is obviously well beyond

[51]*TMD*, LXIX, 101–11. Not in *Tarājim al-nisā'*.

[52]*TMD*, LXIX, 180–90; *Tarājim al-nisā'*, 126–37.

[53]*TMD*, LXX, 144–46; *Tarājim al-nisā'*, 315–17.

[54]*TMD*, LXX, 75–122; *Tarājim al-nisā'*, 343–87.

[55]*TMD*, LXIX, 120–28. Not in *Tarājim al-nisā'*.

[56]*TMD*, LXIX, 67–78. Not in *Tarājim al-nisā'*.

the scope of this volume. However, the papers in this volume are five steps in the right direction. Although they do not necessarily represent agreement as to the particulars of Ibn 'Asākir's historiographic agenda(s), each paper addresses important aspects of his methodology in his presentation of his vision of Syria' past. In so doing, they illustrate well some of the kinds of questions that *TMD* enables us to address with respect to early Islamic history. Let us now turn our attention to these papers.

The Contributions in This Volume

Ibn 'Asākir's choice to include so many pre-Islamic Biblical and extra-Biblical sacred biographies in his *TMD* is rooted in the larger Islamic prophet stories (*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*) tradition of vindicating the message and mission of Muḥammad the Messenger of God by demonstrating the continuity between the lives and ministries of the ancient prophets in Syria (which of course includes *al-arḍ al-muqaddasa* [the Holy Land]) and Muḥammad's life and ministry in first/seventh-century Arabia. Ibn 'Asākir employs a narrative formula in his biographies of sacred figures that is similar to that employed in his scholarly biographies. The principal difference is that his biographies of pre-Islamic sacred figures contain considerably more narrative and anecdotal material. This is possible in part because Ibn 'Asākir is able—even compelled—to draw on the disparate and voluminous Islamic prophet stories (*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*) tradition as well as other materials pertaining to these figures that were available in his day. However, as noted above, Ibn 'Asākir is more than a mere compiler of the sources he had at hand.

Suleiman A. Mourad demonstrates quite clearly that Ibn 'Asākir was an active redactor of the materials available to him with the goal of constructing a biography of Jesus that spoke directly to the issues of his day, especially the sixth/twelfth-century context of the Crusader threat to Syria. Mourad argues that Ibn 'Asākir does this in two ways: 1) by generally eschewing the Islamic prophet stories (*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*) material on Jesus in favor of more ascetically oriented literature that better suited his purpose of presenting an image of Jesus as an austere ascetic whose relation to Muḥammad ranked him above all other prophets; and 2) by linking Jesus to Damascus with reports that locate the height (*rabwa*) where Jesus and Mary, his mother, took refuge in Damascus,[57] as well as reports indicating Damascus as the place of Jesus' second coming. The picture that emerges is that Ibn 'Asākir's ascetic Jesus

[57]Sūrat al-Mu'minūn (23), v. 50.

was not only a one-time resident of Damascus; as the Messiah and as the expected *mahdī*, Jesus would be a future resident as well, one who would return before the End of Days to bring final victory to Islam over all other religions and achieve ultimate peace on earth. In the context of the sixth/twelfth century, Ibn 'Asākir viewed the Franks as an immediate danger to Islam, for Jesus' true followers—the Muslims—were being persecuted and killed by Jesus' infidel followers—the historical Christians, that is, the Franks.

As noted above, Ibn 'Asākir's inclusion of so many government officials and political actors from the early Islamic period may simply be an artifact of his sources. This may also account for the fact that roughly one third of Ibn 'Asākir's biographies date from this period as well. Nevertheless, he still chose to do something with the sources at his disposal. Hence, I would suggest that a plausible explanation for the presence of a host of government officials and political actors from the early Islamic period may be rooted in Ibn 'Asākir's understanding of their respective roles in the establishment, propagation and preservation of right religion in Damascus and Syria. Ibn 'Asākir includes Rāshidūn- and Umayyad-period biographies in part to demonstrate the importance of Damascus and Syria in the founding and expansion of the Islamic empire, in large part under the direction of the Syrian caliphs from the Banū Umayya clan of Quraysh. Certainly the Umayyads' success in establishing the first and phenomenally far-flung Islamic empire is more than sufficient reason to warrant their inclusion in a local history of Damascus. Such local particularism, if not patriotism, is by no means just a modern phenomenon; it was quite common in the medieval Islamic world, as we can see from the preponderance of *faḍā'il* literature, those works that extolled the virtues of a given city.[58]

While Ibn 'Asākir is not unconcerned with the political activities of official or unofficial political actors in Syria, he is more concerned with information that sheds light on the character of these individuals. Hence, many of the biographical entries for these men include reports relevant to their piety and religious virtues as well as reports of what they did in regard to the transmission of religious knowledge—namely which, if any, *ḥadīths* they transmitted and whether they could be considered to be trustworthy transmitters. As is often the case, one's piety and reliability as a transmitter of *ḥadīth* are presented as one and the same thing.

[58]One must also remember that the Banū 'Asākir had married into the Banū l-Qurashī in the late fifth/eleventh century. See above, 6.

As Fred M. Donner notes in his essay, Ibn 'Asākir's emphasis on character is especially evident in the strategies of compilation employed in his lengthy biographies of the four Rāshidūn caliphs.[59] As one might expect, Ibn 'Asākir is rather Syro-centric in his presentation of these figures; however, he does not limit himself solely to these individuals' actions in Syria. Donner argues that Ibn 'Asākir pursues a two-fold agenda in his biographies of Rāshidūn period figures: 1) to present as fully as possible events in Syria; and 2) to present major figures fully enough so that his readers could obtain from his compilation a comprehensive overview of them as historical actors. Donner argues that while Ibn 'Asākir seeks to portray each of the Rāshidūn caliphs in a positive light, he seems especially concerned to include material that would portray the problematical and controversial third Rāshidūn (and first Umayyad) caliph, 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān (d. 35/656), in a positive way. Donner demonstrates quite convincingly that Ibn 'Asākir's clear authorial intent was to present to his readers an overwhelmingly positive picture of 'Uthmān as a pious Muslim who entered Paradise, and to cast aspersions on those who claimed that 'Uthmān's blood was licit or who sought to portray him as a usurper of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib's (d. 40/661) claim to the caliphate.[60]

While Mourad and Donner address the fundamental issues of Ibn 'Asākir's political and sectarian biases, Marianne Engle Cameron and Steven C. Judd address the always painstakingly thorny and complicated issue of the reliability of our sources for early Islamic history. Marianne Engle Cameron's essay differs from the other essays in this volume in that she is concerned with how Ibn 'Asākir's *TMD* can be employed to clarify our understanding of the work of the famous Sayf ibn 'Umar (d. *ca.* 180/796). To this end, her essay is a tightly focused comparative study of al-Ṭabarī's and Ibn 'Asākir's use of Sayf's *Kitāb al-ridda wa-l-futūḥ* [The Book of the Wars of Apostasy and Conquest]. Based on meticulous comparative *isnād* analysis as well as on biographical and other textual evidence, Cameron argues that al-Ṭabarī and Ibn 'Asākir were using the same recension of Sayf for their treatments of the conquest period in their respective works: the recension of the Shāfi'ī *muḥaddith* Abū Bakr ibn Sayf (d. 315 or 316/927 or 928). Moreover, Cameron suggests that al-Ṭabarī, not Ibn 'Asākir, is responsible for

[59]See Appendix E for a listing of Ibn 'Asākir's biographies of Muḥammad and the four Rāshidūn caliphs.

[60]Donner notes that much of this material is attributed to the Prophet himself or to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and comprises about 200 of the 540 pages of the printed text.

the textual variations between the Sayf accounts found in their respective works.

Stephen Judd's essay is a careful analysis of Ibn 'Asākir's sources for eight late-Umayyad period figures: four scholars and four caliphs.[61] Although Ibn 'Asākir draws on a host of material, much of which is unidentifiable and/or lost, Judd demonstrates that Ibn 'Asākir meticulously and accurately reproduced the material from the known sources examined in his essay. Judd also notes that in the eight biographies he examines, Ibn 'Asākir surprisingly reports very little material whatsoever from the mainstays of early Islamic history: al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892), al-Madā'inī (d. *ca.* 225/840), and al-Wāqidī (d. 207/823). Judd speculates that although Ibn 'Asākir was aware of this material and most probably had access to it either in Damascus or during his sojourns in Iraq, he chose to omit material from al-Ṭabarī and the well-established Iraqi historiographical tradition because of his apparent intent to rely as much as possible on Syrian sources for his *TMD*.

Paul M. Cobb, in the final essay in this volume, addresses Ibn 'Asākir's usefulness for understanding the history of the important transitional period of early 'Abbāsid rule in Syria. He argues that there are two means of countering the Iraqo-centric vision of the mainstays of early Islamic history discussed by Judd: 1) by stepping outside the Islamic Arabic historiographic tradition altogether; and 2) by examining more closely the traditional Islamic Arabic historiographical tradition, most notably by exploiting the material to be found in *TMD*. Cobb argues that *TMD* is most useful as a source for two elite groups within Syrian society who are often mere shadows or completely unknown in other sources: 'Abbāsid provincial governors and local Syrian notables. Cobb illustrates *TMD*'s potential for illuminating more fully this heretofore rather murky period of Syrian history with a detailed case study of Ibn 'Asākir's treatment of the revolt of the tribal notable Abū l-Haydhām al-Murrī (177/793). Cobb demonstrates Ibn 'Asākir's skill at shaping the disparate sources at his disposal to fashion a portrait of Abū l-Haydhām in such a way that his biography of this rather popular and charismatic rebel becomes a kind of discourse on the perils of rebellion (*fitna*).

[61]The four late-Umayyad scholars are al-Awzā'ī (d. *ca.* 157/773), Makḥūl al-Shāmī (d. *ca.* 113/731), Thawr ibn Yazīd (d. 153/770), and 'Amr ibn Muhājir (d. 139/756). The four late-Umayyad caliphs are Yazīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik (d. 105/724), al-Walīd ibn Yazīd (d. 126/743), Ibrāhīm ibn al-Walīd (d. 127/744), and Marwān ibn Muḥammad (d. 132/750).

Conclusion

All the papers in this volume demonstrate that whether drawing on Sayf ibn ʿUmar as discussed by Cameron; Abū Zurʿa al-Dimashqī, Khalīfa ibn Khayyāṭ, Ibn Saʿd, etc. as discussed by Judd; or the numerous other sources discussed by the contributors to this volume, Ibn ʿAsākir was a meticulous and accurate transmitter of that material. And as such, we can surmise with some confidence that he was equally meticulous in his reporting of other extant materials that have yet to be examined, as well as of materials that are now lost. Nevertheless, as the papers demonstrate as well, Ibn ʿAsākir was far more than a mere compiler of materials that he had at hand. One of Ibn ʿAsākir's principal criteria in structuring his biographies—whether scholarly, prophetic, or political—is the moral and religious model or example that each person represents. That is, in their lives we find guidance on how to live an authentic Muslim life.

Suleiman Mourad argues this in his discussion of Ibn ʿAsākir's portrayal of an austerely ascetic Jesus as the model for the faithful in the Crusader context of sixth/twelfth-century Syria. Fred Donner argues that, for the believer, even Ibn ʿAsākir's biographies of the Rāshidūn caliphs—especially the problematical and controversial ʿUthmān—demonstrate the respect that is owed to temporal rulers as well as their positive contributions to the religious life of the community. Paul Cobb argues that Ibn ʿAsākir's distaste for *fitna* in Abū l-Haydhām's revolt is what one should expect of a Sunnī religious scholar, for such distaste is entirely in keeping with the long-established consensus among Sunnī scholars that rebellion is evil and invested with satanic associations. Here, Mourad, Donner and Cobb cross paths as they illustrate Ibn ʿAsākir's deep concern with the proper moral behavior of the Muslim community, advocating a withdrawal from the conflicts and rebellions of the day in favor of a more pious and united community of Muḥammad in the context of the very real and debilitating problem of inter-Muslim strife, as well as the Frankish threat to sixth/twelfth-century Syria.

Ibn ʿAsākir's *TMD* is without a doubt a massive and rich source of fundamental importance to a more complete understanding of the history of Damascus and Syria during the first five and one-half Islamic centuries. However, as the contributors to this volume note repeatedly, although Ibn ʿAsākir is a meticulously accurate transmitter of the host of sources he employs, one cannot simply view *TMD* as a dispassionate repository of information to be mined indiscriminately. One must always be aware of and seek to discern Ibn ʿAsākir's particular and certainly selective vision of Syria's past constructed from the wide variety of material found therein. For as a local historian, Ibn ʿAsākir, employing the Khaṭīb's *Ta'rīkh Baghdād* as his model, seeks to demonstrate the uniquely privileged role of his home town and province—Damascus and Syria—in his vision of the past. And as such, he skillfully brings together in one place the biographies of thousands of men and women—religious scholars, pre-Islamic sacred figures, caliphs, government officials, and even rebels—who participated in this noble endeavor.

2

Jesus According to Ibn ‘Asākir*

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Introduction

For Muslims, the Biblical prophets are Muslim prophets; Abraham, Noah, Moses, and Jesus,[1] to name but a few, were sent by God to preach Islam. As early as the second/eighth century, stories about these prophets became widely popular in the Muslim world, forming the genre called the "Tales of the Prophets" (*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*), of which some works are still extant. One can safely assume that by the sixth/twelfth century, such literature was not only popular but was considered an essential part of the education of any Muslim religious scholar, especially since it provided a historical background to and narrative context for the scant Qur'ānic references to these prophets.

Ibn ‘Asākir (499–571/1105–76) included a host of Biblical prophets and sacred figures, as well as a few ancient Arab prophets, in his *TMD* not so much because he wanted to preserve their stories, but in an attempt to show the merits (*faḍā'il*) of Damascus.[2] However, Ibn ‘Asākir did not include

*I would like to thank James E. Lindsay, Walid Saleh and Stephen J. Davis for reading drafts of this paper and providing me with their valuable remarks and criticisms. Certainly, any errors are my own responsibility.

[1]In Ibn ‘Asākir's *TMD* as well as other Muslim literature, Jesus is generally referred to as ‘Īsā ibn Maryam ("Jesus son of Mary"), less often as al-Masīḥ. In this paper, the name Jesus is used throughout.

[2]See Appendix D for a list of the pre-Islamic Biblical and extra-Biblical prophets and sacred figures included in *TMD*. So far, beside my work on Ibn ‘Asākir's biography of Jesus, there is only one extensive study about another Biblical prophet in *TMD*, namely David: see James E. Lindsay, "‘Alī Ibn ‘Asākir as a Preserver of *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*: the Case of David b. Jesse," *Studia Islamica* 82 (1995), 45–82.

Jesus among these prophets merely to enhance the merits of Damascus with yet another prophet. In fact, Ibn ‘Asākir incorporated the material associating Jesus with Damascus into the section on the merits of the city at the beginning of *TMD* and not in his biography of Jesus *per se*, which brings us to the major question that this paper seeks to address: why did Ibn ‘Asākir decide to include Jesus in his *TMD* if his biography of Jesus was not used in the first place to promote the merits of Damascus?

The answer to this question is rooted in the fact that in classical Muslim lore Jesus was the only prophet who was associated with the future. His peculiar importance as a prophet originated from his association with the Day of Resurrection, namely his second coming before the end of time. A short reference to his second coming is found in the Qur'ān,[3] and several reports about it—some of them attributed to Muḥammad—were even included in *ḥadīth* collections. Moreover, by Ibn ‘Asākir's day, Jesus had already been transformed by Muslim ascetics, especially the mystics, into an ascetic (*zāhid*) by means of stories about his ascetic way of life as well as through sayings in which he cursed this world. Apparently, many reports about Jesus' asceticism were made up by these ascetics; others were simply borrowed from Christian traditions.

By Ibn ‘Asākir's day, the life of Jesus found in the "Tales of the Prophets" compilations centered mainly around three aspects of his career as a prophet: his miracles, his asceticism and his second coming. In Ibn ‘Asākir's biography of Jesus, however, we find him focusing on six themes rather than three: 1) that Jesus was a Muslim prophet, 2) who performed miracles, 3) and practiced asceticism, 4) that he was closely associated with Muḥammad, 5) and that he would be revealed before the end of time (his second coming), 6) as the Mahdī (the rightly guided savior). Ibn ‘Asākir employs these six themes to assert his vision of Jesus in the context of the Crusaders' attempts to establish a Christian kingdom in Syria. This paper will address five of Ibn ‘Asākir's six themes, although not necessarily in the order listed above. The second, namely Jesus' miracles, will not be discussed here.

The Crusaders' presence in Syria represented a challenge to Islam and was clearly an issue that preoccupied Muslims of the day. Ibn ‘Asākir, in my opinion, was overwhelmed by this challenge, and used the biography of Jesus to express his religious preoccupations. He found the Jesus figure in the earlier "Tales of the Prophets" unsuitable for such a purpose since it

[3]See Sūrat al-Nisā' (4), v. 159.

lacked the most important element—the historical context of sixth/twelfth-century Syria with its political and religious dimensions. Therefore, he undertook a radical reshaping of the image of Jesus in Muslim lore so that it could be employed in the context of Christian–Muslim polemics, and thus become relevant to the religious and military challenge posed by the Crusaders.[4]

The task of reshaping Jesus to fit a Crusader context did not necessarily require Ibn 'Asākir to fabricate material about Jesus. Rather, he carefully selected reports from earlier sources in an attempt to rewrite the biography of Jesus in a way that could best serve his purpose. These reports were mostly taken from *ḥadīth* collections and works on Qur'ānic exegesis, as well as works on asceticism (*zuhd*), which brings us to the issue of the kind of image of Jesus that Ibn 'Asākir had inherited. Reports about Jesus are encountered almost in every genre of Muslim lore.[5] However, a comprehensive image of him can only be found in the "Tales of the Prophets" literature, with which Ibn 'Asākir clearly was familiar, but which he apparently chose not to incorporate into his biography of Jesus. In other genres, one finds reports about Jesus that deal with a particular aspect of his personality: his prophethood, his asceticism, his second coming, etc. These reports were known prior to Ibn 'Asākir's time, and can be found in earlier works of scholars from Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Iran and Central Asia. As is the case with many of his biographies, Ibn 'Asākir relied as much as he could on Damascene and Syrian scholars for the material in his biography of Jesus. That he did so demonstrates that some of these reports, at least, were already in circulation in Syria prior to Ibn 'Asākir's day. However, the bulk of Ibn 'Asākir's material on Jesus is reported on the authority of Iraqi and other eastern scholars, which strongly suggests that most of the material in Ibn 'Asākir's biography of Jesus may have been unknown in Syria. In this respect, Ibn 'Asākir's biography of Jesus illustrates the broad scope of his religious knowledge, knowledge acquired as he collected and recorded all kinds of religious

[4]On Ibn 'Asākir's preoccupation as a scholar in the political and military struggle against the Crusaders, see Introduction, 7–8 above.

[5]A large collection of Jesus' sayings and stories from a vast number of Arabic sources has been recently translated into English by Tarif Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus: Sayings and Stories in Islamic Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001). Khalidi's introduction and comments on almost every narrative report traces the evolution of the image of Jesus in Islamic culture, reflecting in many ways Muslim religious, political and social preoccupations.

and quasi-religious material during his extensive travels.[6]

Ibn 'Asākir's Jesus, as will be shown below, was a Muslim prophet whose true followers were Muslims persecuted and killed by Jesus' infidel followers, the historical Christians. He was an austere ascetic whose relation to Muḥammad, confirmed by prophetic *ḥadīths*, ranked him above all other prophets. In the end, his second coming as the Mahdī will conclude the triumph of Islam over all religions and achieve ultimate peace on earth.

In constructing this portrait of Jesus, Ibn 'Asākir apparently favored strange stories about him, even if such stories removed him from the historical and geographical context of first-century Palestine. For instance, Ibn 'Asākir quoted the early Kūfan traditionist al-Sha'bī (d. 103/721) as the authority for an unusual dating of the life of Jesus. According to al-Sha'bī, Jesus was born on 25 December (no year is mentioned) and ascended to Heaven 933 years[7] before Muḥammad's *hijra* to Medina.[8] In other words, the earthly career of Jesus ended in 311 BC, rather than in *ca.* AD 30 as is historically accepted.

Let us now examine how Ibn 'Asākir connected Jesus to Damascus and, therefore, justified his inclusion in the biographical section of his *TMD*—a work principally concerned with those who inhabited Damascus. In an introductory chapter dealing with the merits of Damascus, Ibn 'Asākir opted for a contested interpretation of a Qur'ānic verse referring to the flight of Mary and Jesus from Judaea, known in Matthew (2:13–22) as the Massacre of the Innocents. The Qur'ānic verse reads: "And We made the son of Mary and his mother a portent, and We gave them refuge on a height (*rabwa*), a place of flocks and water springs."[9] The historical tradition,[10] by

[6]See above, 3–5.

[7]The date 933 refers to the Seleucid era. Al-Sha'bī must have known some Syriac sources that placed the *hijra* of Muḥammad in 933, and presumed that Jesus had ascended to Heaven 933 years before the *hijra* of Muḥammad. For example, James of Edessa (seventh century AD) placed the first year of Muḥammad's reign over the Arabs in 933: see Andrew Palmer, *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993), 37. Another Syriac tradition placed the *hijra* in 932: see Palmer, 43. I would like to thank Lawrence I. Conrad for pointing me to the Seleucid era.

[8]Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 80 vols., ed. 'Umar ibn Gharāma al-'Amrawī and 'Alī Shīrī (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1995–2001), XLVII, 354. See also Ibn 'Asākir, *Sīrat al-sayyid al-Masīḥ li-Ibn 'Asākir al-Dimashqī*, ed. Suleiman A. Mourad (Amman: Dār al-shurūq, 1996), 33 (no. 10). Henceforth referred to as *TMDM*.

[9]Sūrat al-Mu'minūn (23), v. 50.

[10]See for example al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, 15 vols., ed. M.J. de Goeje *et*

Ibn 'Asākir's admission,[11] placed the *rabwa* in Egypt. Ibn 'Asākir, however, identified the *rabwa* with Damascus.[12] Moreover, Ibn 'Asākir reported other Muslim traditions dealing with the second coming of Jesus, and here also he decided to credit those placing the second coming in Damascus.[13] To Ibn 'Asākir, Jesus was not only a past resident of Damascus, but also a future one.

Clearly, Ibn 'Asākir was so obsessed with connecting Jesus—and other sacred figures—to Damascus that he was willing to relate the most bizarre stories about them. For example, he includes a report that places the burial place of Mary, Jesus and his disciples in Damascus, namely in the Farādīs Cemetery outside the walls of the ancient city.[14] Such was the nature of some of the earlier material about Jesus that Ibn 'Asākir presented to his readers.

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al. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1879–1901), I, 729; and Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī l-ta'rīkh*, 13 vols. (Beirut: Dār ṣādir, 1965), I, 312.

[11] *TMD*, XLVII, 376, 378; *TMDM*, 68 (no. 57), 70 (no. 58).

[12] See *TMD*, I, 203–209; II, 337. In the Sunnī tradition of Qur'ānic exegesis, the *rabwa* was identified with Damascus, Cairo (Miṣr), Jerusalem, al-Ramla (in Palestine), and Bethlehem: see, for example, al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 7 vols., ed. Bashshār 'A. Ma'rūf and 'Iṣām F. al-Ḥaristānī (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-risāla, 1994), V, 367–68; al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi' li-aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, 22 vols., ed. Muḥammad I. al-Ḥafnāwī and Maḥmūd H. 'Uthmān (Cairo: Dār al-ḥadīth, 1994), XII, 133–34. In Shī'ī literature, on the other hand, the *rabwa* in question was located near al-Ḥīra in southern Iraq: see Sa'īd ibn Hibat Allāh al-Rāwandī, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*, ed. Ghulām Riḍā al-Yazdī (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-mufīd, 1989), 265 (no. 305); al-Ṭabarsī, *Majma' al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 10 vols., ed. Hāshim al-Maḥallātī (Beirut: Dār iḥyā' al-turāth al-'arabī, 1992), VII, 144–45. It was also identified with al-Najaf in Iraq: see 'Alī al-Muttaqī, *Kanz al-'ummāl fī sunan al-aqwāl wa-l-af'āl*, 22 vols. (Haydarabad: Dā'irat al-ma'ārif al-'uthmānīya, 1945–75), II, 301 (no. 1653). Ibn 'Asākir was aware of all these contradicting traditions: see *TMD*, I, 209–13.

[13] *TMD*, I, 224–29.

[14] *Ibid.*, II, 237. Other examples of Ibn 'Asākir's narrative strategy of using rather suspect reports to link pre-Islamic sacred figures with Damascus include his treatment of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar. Ibn 'Asākir begins his biography of Abraham with a report that he was born in Barza, a village on Jabal Qāsyūn on the outskirts of Damascus (*fī ghūṭat Dimashq*); *Ibid.*, VI, 164. He also includes a report that the ruler who gave Hagar to Sarah (who gave her to Abraham) lived in 'Ayn al-Jarr, located in the valley between Ba'labakk and Damascus; Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq: tarājim al-nisā'*, ed. Sukayna al-Shihābī (Damascus: Majma' al-lugha al-'arabīya, 1982), 415. He immediately points out that both of these reports are erroneous; nevertheless, it appears that he employs them to establish a physical link between Abraham, Sarah and Hagar and the city of Damascus. I would like to thank James E. Lindsay for drawing this to my attention.

Jesus the Muslim Prophet

Ibn 'Asākir's biography of Jesus covers his birth, childhood, career as a prophet, ascension to Heaven, and second coming. His sources for the biography of Jesus were three: 1) Qur'ānic lore, featuring exegetical traditions; 2) *ḥadīth* lore, featuring reports attributed to Muḥammad; and 3) popular lore, featuring reports quoted from early Muslim sources other than the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*. Some of the material in the third category was originally taken from the New Testament and from the Apocrypha[15]—e.g. the Infancy Story of Thomas[16]—but reshaped to befit the concept of Jesus as a Muslim prophet. Consequently, this material emphasized the human nature of Jesus and promoted him as a prophet sent to the people of Israel, whose mission was the preaching of Islam and whose true followers were Muslims. For example, elaborating on material originally derived from Luke 11:27, Ibn 'Asākir quoted the traditionist Khaythama ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kūfī (d. 90/709): "A woman said to Jesus son of Mary: 'Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breast that suckled you.' Jesus replied: 'No, but blessed is he who reads the Qur'ān and follows what is in it.'"[17] This report is identi-

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[15] This is not to suggest that the Qur'ān did not borrow from Christian sources. Such borrowing could be clearly shown in cases like the two Qur'ānic stories about the Annunciation: Sūrat Āl 'Imrān (3), vs. 35–49, originally borrowed from the Protevangelium of James, and Sūrat Maryam (19), vs. 2–28, originally borrowed from Luke 1–2. See my "On the Qur'ānic Stories about Mary and Jesus," *Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies* 1.2 (1999), 13–24. Also there is the Qur'ānic story of Mary and the palm tree in Sūrat Maryam (19), v. 25, found in the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew: see my "From Hellenism to Christianity and Islam: the Origin of the Palm-Tree Story Concerning Mary and Jesus," *Oriens Christianus* (forthcoming); Edgar Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2 vols., ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), I, 411–12 (no. 20). And finally, the story of Jesus creating birds from clay in Sūrat Āl 'Imrān (3), v. 49, and Sūrat al-Mā'ida (5), v. 110, found in the Infancy Story of Thomas: see Hennecke, I, 392–93 (no. 2). For more information on the Qur'ānic borrowing from Christian sources, see Neal Robinson, *Christ in Islam and Christianity* (Houndmills: Macmillian, 1991), 17–22.

[16] Of such stories, there are the story of Jesus learning the alphabet in *TMD*, XLVII, 373–77; *TMDM*, 64–68 (nos. 55–57), found in the Infancy Story of Thomas: see Hennecke, I, 394 (no. 6); and the story of Jesus transforming the children hiding in a house into monkeys and swine in *TMD*, XLVII, 373; *TMDM*, 63–64 (no. 54), found in the Arabic Infancy Gospel (but turning them into goats): see Hennecke, I, 409 (no. 40). See also Luigi Moraldi, "Infanzia di Gezù: Ms. Arabo G 11 Sup. della Biblioteca Ambrosiana," *Rendiconti, Istituto Lombardo Academia di Scienze e Lettere* 127 (1993), 82 (no. 6), where the children were transformed into swine, monkeys and wolves.

[17] *TMD*, XLVII, 434; *TMDM*, 152 (no. 161).

cal to that in Luke except that the word "Qur'ān" replaces Luke's "word of God", to emphasize the Islamic dimension of Jesus' prophethood.[18]

Elsewhere, Ibn 'Asākir cites a report attributed to the Companion 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās (d. 69/688):

> [After the Ascension of Jesus to Heaven, his followers] divided into three communities. One said: "God was among us as long as he wished, then He ascended to Heaven." Those were the Jacobites. Another said: "The son of God was among us for as long as he wished, then [God] made him ascend to Him." Those were the Nestorians. [Yet] another said: "[Jesus] was the servant of God and His messenger for as long as God wished, then God made him ascend to Him." Those were the Muslims. The two infidel communities gained ascendancy over the Muslim community and destroyed it. [For this reason,] Islam remained in eclipse until God sent Muḥammad, God's blessing and peace be upon him.[19]

It is rather obvious that this report represents a Muslim version of the Pentecost (Acts 2:1–13) that portrays the Jacobites and the Nestorians—the two Christian sects best known to the Muslims—as having abandoned Islam, and hence as having become infidels by their own choice. But what is remarkable about this report, as well as others similar to it,[20] is that it was also intended to describe the historical division of the Church as the result of the many ecclesiastical councils where the nature of Christ was debated. For instance, in one of these reports Ibn 'Asākir mentions four groups rather than three—namely, the Jacobites, the Nestorians, the Muslims, and those who said that Jesus "is one of three Gods": God as one deity, Jesus as another deity, and his mother Mary as a third deity. This fourth group, according

[18]A similar version is recorded by the jurist Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) a few centuries before Ibn 'Asākir, where Jesus' reply reads: "Blessed is he whom God has taught His Book and who dies without having become haughty": Ibn Hanbal, *Kitāb al-zuhd*, ed. Muḥammad S.B. Zaghlūl (Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-'arabī, 1994), 142–43 (no. 470); also Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus*, 85 (no. 59) (translation from Khalidi). The change from "His Book", which is closer to the words of Luke, to "the Qur'ān" illustrates the process of turning Jesus into a Muslim prophet.

[19]*TMD*, XLVII, 475; *TMDM*, 213–14 (no. 261).

[20]Ibn 'Asākir gave three other variant forms of this report: see *TMD*, XLVII, 474–75, 477–78, 479–80; *TMDM*, 211–12 (no. 260), 216–17 (no. 262), 219–20 (no. 264).

to Ibn 'Asākir, "were the Israelites (*al-isrā'īla*) who were the kings of the Christians (*mulūk al-naṣārā*)".[21]

The issue of the disputes and splits among the followers of Jesus is further attested in other reports. One such report attempts to clarify the Qur'ānic refutation of the Crucifixion of Jesus: "They slew him not nor crucified him, but it appeared so unto them."[22] On this matter, Ibn 'Asākir cites a report that had its origin in the New Testament story of the appearance of Jesus to his disciples after his Resurrection:[23] "The Jews and the Naṣārā said that he was killed. But the Ḥuwārīyūn knew that he was not killed, and they contradicted the report of the Naṣārā and the Jews."[24] The Ḥuwārīyūn, in this context, should refer to the disciples of Jesus. The Naṣārā, on the other hand, most probably refer to the Roman authorities, since in medieval times, Muslims recognized the Christian Byzantine empire as the Romans.

The perception that the followers of Jesus became infidels is further attested in the stories Ibn 'Asākir relates about the expected second coming of Jesus which, according to Ibn 'Asākir, would take place in Damascus. One of Jesus' principal tasks then would be "to fight for Islam"[25] and "to destroy all the [non-Muslim] sects", all of whom, according to Ibn 'Asākir, were infidels, although each sect was infidel in its own way.[26]

Jesus' Second Coming

Ibn 'Asākir envisioned Jesus' imminent second coming to lead the Muslim holy war against the Crusaders, or more correctly to conclude the Muslim holy war against them. To this end, he relates an alleged prophecy, attributed to the Companion 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ (d. 65/684), which he interprets as pertaining to the Crusades:

> One person asked ['Abd Allāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ]: "Are you 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Amr?" He said: "Yes." [The man] said: "Are

[21]*TMD*, XLVII, 478–79; *TMDM*, 217–18 (no. 263). The mention of the Israelites as the kings of the Christians was probably a confusion between the Muslim concept that Jesus was sent to the people of Israel and that the Roman empire, or more correctly the Byzantine empire, became Christian.

[22]Sūrat al-Nisā' (4), v. 157.

[23]Matthew 28:16–20, Mark 16:14, Luke 24:36–43, and John 20:19–29.

[24]*TMD*, XLVII, 476; *TMDM*, 214 (no. 262).

[25]*TMD*, XLVII, 369; *TMDM*, 58 (no. 48).

[26]*TMD*, XLVII, 371; *TMDM*, 61 (no. 49).

you the one who claims that the Hour comes at the end of [this] century?" ['Abd Allāh] said: "By God, did I say this? Who knows the coming of the Hour except God? You people of Iraq relate things that are not likewise. Ibn Ḥaml al-Ḍa'n (son of the sheep-bearing), a Byzantine (*rūmī*), one of whose parents is a demon (*shayṭān*), is about to come out against the Muslims leading 500,000 [soldiers] by land and [another] 500,000 by sea and disembarking between Acre and Tyre. Then he will say: 'People of the ships, come out from them,' and he will order them (the ships) to be burnt. The Muslims will seek each other's help. Then they will fight for a month, and [the Muslims] will find no people to stand between them and Constantinople and Rome." He ['Abd Allāh] said: "While they (the Muslims) are [in] that [situation], they will [hear] that the Antichrist (al-Dajjāl) has taken over among their families." He said: "They will drop what is in their hands and return." He said: "A famine will fall upon the people (the Muslims), and while they are in this [situation], they will hear a voice from Heaven [saying]: 'Rejoice, help is coming to you.' They will say: 'Jesus son of Mary has descended.' They will rejoice in him, and he will rejoice in them, and they will say [to him]: 'Pray, O Spirit of God,' and he will say: 'God has honored this [Muslim] community; therefore, no one should lead their prayers except [one] of them.' So the Commander of the Faithful, then Mu'āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān, will lead the people in prayer, and Jesus will pray behind him. After Jesus finishes [his prayer], he will take his lance, go toward the Antichrist and kill him. Then Jesus will die and the Muslims will wash him and bury him."[27]

This prophecy, according to Ibn 'Asākir, was meant to explain the well-known *ḥadīth* regarding the revivifier of Islam: "God will send this community a person who will renew its faith at the beginning of every hundred years."[28] The

[27] *TMD*, XLVII, 505–508; *TMDM*, 257–61 (no. 327). The same prophecy is also found in al-Muttaqī's *Kanz al-'ummāl*, XVIII, 201–204 (no. 734). Al-Muttaqī (d. 975/1567) did not mention his sources, and it seems that he had copied it from Ibn 'Asākir's *TMD*.

[28] Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan Abū Dāwūd*, 4 vols., ed. Muḥammad M. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-sa'āda, 1951), IV, 156 (no. 4291).

Crusaders had first arrived in Syria towards the end of the fifth/eleventh century, shortly before Ibn 'Asākir was born. Apparently, Ibn 'Asākir expected the Muslims to achieve their final victory against them before the end of the sixth/twelfth century. The prophecy about this victory, attributed to a Companion of Muḥammad, may well have been part of the Muslim lore that developed in Syria in reaction to the Crusades—lore designed to restore the Muslims' confidence by assuring them that the Crusaders were indeed infidels and not the true followers of Jesus; that Jesus would always be on the side of the Muslims; and that the Muslims' defeat at the hand of these invading infidels would actually be avenged by Jesus upon his imminent second coming.

Could this prophecy have been the work of Ibn 'Asākir's imagination? To be fair, one should attempt to determine whether it contained any original elements from the Muslim lore available to him by examining his sources for this prophecy, as well as its specific content. Ibn 'Asākir claimed to have transmitted this prophecy from three traditionists, with an extended chain of authorities (*isnād*). These three traditionists are Abū l-Qāsim 'Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad al-'Allāf al-Baghdādī (d. 521/1127), Abū Manṣūr 'Abd al-Jabbār ibn Aḥmad al-'Ukbarī (d. 535/1141), and Abū l-Qāsim Ismā'īl ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Samarqandī al-Dimashqī (d. 536/1142). One cannot determine whether the reports of these traditionists were originally identical, since they seem to survive only as quoted by Ibn 'Asākir. But generally in classical Muslim scholarship, when an author decided to combine his sources, it was likely that he was editing reports that were similar but not necessarily identical. As will be shown below, it is not far fetched to assume that Ibn 'Asākir brought together the reports of these three traditionists, edited them, and added the necessary details to form the prophecy.

As to the content of the prophecy, one can trace four parts of it to the *Muṣannaf* of 'Abd al-Razzāq ibn Hammām al-San'ānī (d. 211/826).[29] It should be noted, however, that although the *Muṣannaf* was one of the earliest *ḥadīth* collections, it was not considered to rank among the canonical *ḥadīth* books. Let us now turn our attention to this prophecy.

[29] It may not necessarily have been the case that Ibn 'Asākir used the *Muṣannaf* of 'Abd al-Razzāq. For all practical purposes, he could have encountered the same material in other sources. He was, however, familiar with 'Abd al-Razzaq's work, since, in the biography of Jesus alone, he quoted from 'Abd al-Razzāq eighteen reports that feature in the *Muṣannaf*.

PART ONE: the prophetic saying concerning the person who would renew the faith every hundred years. This part was borrowed from a report found in the *Muṣannaf* attributed to ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ,[30] the same person to whom the prophecy in *TMD* was attributed. According to this report, while in the presence of the Umayyad caliph Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān (r. 41–60/661–80), ʿAbd Allāh was criticized by a person from Iraq because a prediction about the end of time was attributed to him. ʿAbd Allāh denied having said it and informed the person that no one except God could predict the end of time. This same theme appears at the beginning of the prophecy, but without specifying the setting in which the argument between ʿAbd Allāh and that person took place.

PART TWO: the coming of the Byzantine king by sea to fight the Muslims[31] and the landing of his forces between Acre and Tyre. This part was borrowed from a report also found in the *Muṣannaf* and also attributed to ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ.[32] The wording of this part of the prophecy is nearly identical to that of the report preserved by ʿAbd al-Razzāq, except that in the earlier version ʿAbd Allāh did not mention Acre and Tyre. What he mentioned was *kadhā wa-kadhā*, literally, "such and such [a place]". Ibn ʿAsākir had to find place names to replace "such and such" that could fit a Crusader setting. He apparently opted to substitute the names of the two famous maritime centers, Acre and Tyre, which had gained supreme maritime importance during the Crusader period.

PART THREE: Jesus' prayer at the time of his second coming. In the *Muṣannaf*, ʿAbd al-Razzāq attributed to the traditionist Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn (d. 120/738) a saying that Jesus, upon his second coming, would decline to lead the prayer of the Muslims, arguing that this is a prerogative of the Muslim leader.[33] Ibn ʿAsākir identified this Muslim leader as none other than the first Umayyad caliph, Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān (d. 60/680), indicating a clear geographical and political favoritism on his part toward Syria and the Umayyads. In identifying Muʿāwiya as the person who would lead the

[30]ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Al-Muṣannaf*, 11 vols., ed. Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān al-Aʿẓamī (Beirut: al-Maktab al-islāmī, 1970–72), XI, 395–96 (no. 20,829).

[31]The idea of the Byzantine king invading the Muslim land must have been borrowed from the seventh-century Syriac apocalyptic literature, where the savior Byzantine king was perceived to appear and save the Christians of Syria from the oppressions of the Muslims: see the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, in Palmer, 237.

[32]ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, XI, 387–88 (no. 20,813).

[33]*Ibid.*, XI, 399 (no. 20,838).

prayer of the Muslims in the presence of Jesus, Ibn ʿAsākir wanted his readers to infer that this same leader would lead the fight against the Crusaders. Did he expect then a second coming of Muʿāwiya similar to that of Jesus? Apparently he did not. He did, however, want to project his prophecy back in time to give it more authority and credibility. His choice was none other than the most important and significant person to rule the Islamic empire from Damascus, namely Muʿāwiya. This ruler did not feature in the story of Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn, but rather featured in the setting of the story of ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, wherein ʿAbd Allāh was in Muʿāwiya's presence when he was criticized by a man from Iraq because of his presumed prediction of the end of time, as mentioned above.

PART FOUR: the sign of the end of time. In his *Muṣannaf* ʿAbd al-Razzāq cites a report, attributed to the Companion ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd (d. 32/652), that the sign of the end of time will be the outbreak of a war between the Muslims and the Byzantines. However, according to ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd, when the Muslims reached Constantinople, the Antichrist would appear in their homeland, as a result of which they would leave everything and rush back to defend their families and properties.[34] The same story is found in the prophecy. However, in Ibn ʿAsākir's version Rome appears next to Constantinople precisely because of its active role in the Crusades. Such narrative placement confirms that the prophecy was appropriated and refashioned to fit a Crusader context.

One may be able to find some other minor points that could be traced to earlier sources as well. However, it is clear that Ibn ʿAsākir incorporated a number of independent elements into this prophecy, reflecting his obvious geographical and political preferences for Syria and the Umayyads.

Jesus the Mahdī

According to Ibn ʿAsākir, the ascetic Jesus, upon his second coming, will be the Mahdī of Islam—the rightly guided savior who will appear before the end of time to re-establish right religion and order on earth. Traditions about the Mahdī in Islam became popular as early as the middle of the first/seventh century, mainly as the result of the successive civil wars among the Muslims. These traditions were extremely diverse and irreconcilable, and many religious and political personalities in the first/seventh century were considered as Mahdīs, including the companion ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar (d.

[34]*Ibid.*, XI, 385–87 (no. 20,812).

73/692) and the Umayyad caliph ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (r. 99–101/717–20).[35] The identification of Jesus with the Mahdī dates to this period as well, most probably influenced by Christian apocalyptic traditions. Ibn ʿAsākir was aware of some of the Muslim traditions recognizing Jesus as the Mahdī; he was also aware that Muslim scholars generally rejected the identification of Jesus with the Mahdī. Nevertheless, as with his treatment of Jesus' *rabwa*, Ibn ʿAsākir down-played the poor assessment of such accounts in Islamic scholarship. Moreover, in order to buttress Jesus' identification with the Mahdī, Ibn ʿAsākir reports a statement attributed to the famous jurist al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/819): "...and there is no Mahdī other than Jesus son of Mary."[36] Ibn ʿAsākir knew that the general Muslim consensus was that the Mahdī would come from the house of Muḥammad. In fact, Ibn ʿAsākir records the following saying attributed to Muḥammad that supports this view: "How can a community be destroyed [if] I am its beginning, Jesus son of Mary is its end, and the Mahdī, [who is] of my progeny, is in its middle?"[37] Ibn ʿAsākir also mentioned that the traditions identifying the Mahdī as a descendant of Muḥammad were better authenticated than those identifying the Mahdī with Jesus.[38] He made it a point, however, to focus on and opt for the latter, even though, by his own admission, he was well informed as to the problematic nature of the reports associating Jesus with the Mahdī.[39] In this respect, and in relation to the report quoted from al-Shāfiʿī, Ibn ʿAsākir quoted the traditionist Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn ʿUbayd Allāh al-Wāsiṭī (d. mid-third/ninth century), who claimed that al-Shāfiʿī appeared to him in a dream and denied that he had ever related this report.[40] But ironically, Ibn ʿAsākir repeated this report several times through several chains of authorities, as though he wanted to show that one negative assessment of this report did not necessarily make it a fake.[41]

In another instance, Ibn ʿAsākir reproduced identical reports that identify Jesus as the Mahdī from two famous early Muslim traditionists: Mujāhid (d. 103/721) and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728). Both reports read: "The Mahdī

[35]See Wilferd Madelung, art. "al-Mahdī" in *EI*[2], V, 1230b–1238a.
[36]*TMD*, XLVII, 515–16; *TMDM*, 272–73 (no. 346).
[37]*TMD*, XLVII, 521–22; *TMDM*, 281 (no. 358).
[38]*TMD*, XLVII, 518; *TMDM*, 276 (no. 348).
[39]*TMD*, XLVII, 516, 518; *TMDM*, 273 (no. 346), 276 (no. 348).
[40]*TMD*, XLVII, 519; *TMDM*, 277 (no. 349).
[41]*TMD*, XLVII, 515–18; *TMDM*, 272–76 (nos. 346–48).

is Jesus son of Mary."[42] Here, as in the case of al-Shāfiʿī's report, Ibn ʿAsākir was aware that at least one of the two identical reports was poorly received in *ḥadīth* circles. Ibn ʿAsākir mentioned that the report of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī was transmitted by a certain Abū ʿUbayda who was discredited in the *ḥadīth* circles as being *majhūl* ("unknown").[43]

Ibn ʿAsākir's association of Jesus with the Mahdī, despite his knowledge that the latter should be a descendant of Muḥammad, could also have been provoked by the implications of Muslim defeats at the hands of the Crusaders. It is likely that Ibn ʿAsākir considered it a sign of the coming of the end of time. But since both Jesus and the Mahdī had the same mission to restore peace and order on earth by concluding the total triumph of Islam, Ibn ʿAsākir apparently saw no problem with identifying both characters as one.

The material associating Jesus with the Mahdī appears toward the end of the biography of Jesus, in the section featuring other apocalyptic material about him. According to this apocalyptic material, Jesus, at the time of his second coming, will kill the Antichrist (al-Dajjāl) at the Ludd Gate in Jerusalem,[44] and conclude the total triumph of Islam.[45] At that time, no Jew or Christian will die until he believes in Jesus' prophethood.[46]

Jesus and Muḥammad

One critical element in Ibn ʿAsākir's treatment of Jesus as a Muslim prophet was his association with Muḥammad. After the Qur'ān, the *ḥadīths* transmitted in the name of Muḥammad are indisputable authoritative sayings, especially if authenticated. Ibn ʿAsākir made use of them as decisive proofs to support his portrayal of Jesus. With respect to the relationship between the two prophets, Ibn ʿAsākir cited a *ḥadīth*—again, a most unusual one—regarding the *shahāda*, the basic credo of Islam:

> Muḥammad said: Whoever testifies that there is no god but God, alone with no partner, and that Muḥammad is His servant and messenger, *and that Jesus is His servant and messenger and the son of His servant and His word which He gave to Mary, and a*

[42]*TMD*, XLVII, 519; *TMDM*, 277–78 (nos. 350–51).
[43]*TMD*, XLVII, 519; *TMDM*, 278 (no. 351).
[44]*TMD*, XLVII, 508–11; *TMDM*, 261–66 (nos. 328–34).
[45]*TMD*, XLVII, 511–12; *TMDM*, 266–67 (nos. 335–36), 268 (no. 338).
[46]*TMD*, XLVII, 513–14; *TMDM*, 269 (no. 341), 270–71 (nos. 343–44).

> *spirit from Him*, God will admit him to Heaven for what he has [said].[47]

The name of Jesus was originally introduced into this expanded version of the *shahāda* to underline the Muslim concept of Jesus as the prophet whose spiritual relationship to Muḥammad was the closest and most intimate. In this respect, Ibn ʿAsākir also reported the following: "Jesus son of Mary will be buried next to the prophet, God's blessing and peace be upon him, in his house."[48] Ibn ʿAsākir transmitted this report through a chain of authorities featuring the name of the famous Muslim traditionist al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870). Ibn ʿAsākir also quoted al-Bukhārī's assessment of the soundness of this report. According to al-Bukhārī, the report in question is not accepted as authentic (*lā yaṣuḥḥu*) and therefore it should not be observed (*lā yutāba'u*). Ibn ʿAsākir apparently decided not to honor al-Bukhārī's instruction, and carried on with his Jesus regardless of the trustworthiness of the reports about his life and career.[49]

Ibn ʿAsākir's determination to present Jesus in the manner discussed above is further underlined in another *ḥadīth* that treats Jesus' burial place:

> Muḥammad, when asked by his wife ʿĀ'isha whether she could be buried next to him, said: "In the place [of my burial], there is [only] room for my grave, for Abū Bakr's grave, for ʿUmar's grave, and for the grave of Jesus son of Mary, God's blessing and peace be upon him."[50]

Muḥammad, Abū Bakr and ʿUmar were buried next to each other in one burial place in Muḥammad's mosque in Medina. After that, no Muslim has been allowed to be buried there, irrespective of his religious or political significance. That Jesus is featured in this *ḥadīth* along with Muḥammad and the first two caliphs illustrates how exceptional he was to the Muslims, and the extent to which they were eager to Islamize him.

[47] *TMD*, XLVII, 378; *TMDM*, 73 (no. 63). See also al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 7 vols., ed. Muṣṭafā D. al-Bughā (Beirut and Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1987), III, 1267 (no. 3252). Emphasis added.

[48] *TMD*, XLVII, 524; *TMDM*, 283–84 (no. 364).

[49] Concerning other such reports see *TMD*, XLVII, 515–16, 517–19, 523; *TMDM*, 272–73 (no. 346), 275–77 (nos. 348–9), 283 (no. 363).

[50] *TMD*, XLVII, 522–23; *TMDM*, 282 (no. 361).

Ibn ʿAsākir records another *ḥadīth* that further solidifies the relation between Jesus and Muḥammad as fellow-prophets and brothers: "Muḥammad said: 'The prophets are brothers of the same male lineage, and Jesus and I are brothers because he prophesied my [coming], and there were no prophets between me and him.'"[51] It is important to note that this *ḥadīth* admits that Muḥammad's direct relationship to Jesus was tenuous, for he was a descendant of Ishmael and Jesus a descendant of Isaac. Nevertheless, the *ḥadīth* identifies their brotherly relation on the basis of one prophet prophesying the coming of the other.

As a highly respected traditionist, Ibn ʿAsākir must have known more prophetic traditions that he could have used to elaborate further Muḥammad's relation to Jesus than those he related in the biography of Jesus in *TMD*. However, he included the most authoritative ones to make his case very convincing. No one could have asked for more proofs of Jesus' distinguished status as a Muslim prophet than that his name ought to be mentioned in the *shahāda* next to God and Muḥammad, and that he would be buried next to Muḥammad after his second coming.

Jesus the Ascetic

In addition to his portrayal of Jesus as a Muslim prophet, his second coming as the Mahdī, and his relation to Muḥammad, Ibn ʿAsākir also emphasized the ascetic aspect of Jesus' character—even to the extent that he turned him into *the* model ascetic. In early Christianity, Jesus was neither the prototype for asceticism that he would later become[52] nor did he feature in early Christian literature as the ascetic model.[53] Moreover, asceticism appears as a secondary issue in the New Testament: the few references to it, mainly those in the letters of Paul, do not show that Jesus enjoined his

[51] *TMD*, XLVII, 372; *TMDM*, 61–62 (no. 50).

[52] There is little ground to argue that Jesus was conceived in early Christianity as the ascetic model. Both in the Greek orient as well as in the Latin west, saints like Antony (d. 355) and Simeon the Stylite (d. 459), among others, became ascetic models whom monks sought to imitate. The idea of Jesus becoming the ascetic model became popular in the Latin world after the sixth century, when the monastic order became popular and powerful. It is almost by projecting back the life of the monk and adapting Jesus to it that he was turned into the ultimate ascetic. For a discussion about the first incident where Jesus is portrayed as the ideal monk, see Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture* (New York: Perennial Library, 1987), 109–21.

[53] See Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1993), 174–83.

disciples to abstain from this world.[54] On the contrary, Jesus wanted his followers to be involved in it.[55]

In Islamic tradition, however, Jesus was portrayed as an ascetic (*zāhid*) who enjoined his followers to follow his example. Stories about his asceticism were recorded mainly in the ascetic and mystical literature, and also, though to a lesser extent, in such other genres as the "Tales of the Prophets". Some of these stories were even included in works on *ḥadīth*, belles-lettres and poetry. Jesus was somehow perceived by Muslims as a prophetic authority for asceticism in Islam. This was especially the case since the adherents of asceticism in Islam, mainly the mystical orders, could not very easily remodel the already recorded life of Muḥammad for such a purpose.

As noted above, Ibn 'Asākir sought his Jesus in *ḥadīth* and the ascetic (*zuhd*) literature rather than in the traditional "Tales of the Prophets" literature. The ascetic works that he apparently used included Ibn al-Mubārak's (d. 181/797) *Kitāb al-zuhd wa-l-raqā'iq* [The Book of Asceticism and Acts of Compassion]; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal's (d. 241/855), *Kitāb al-zuhd* [The Book of Asceticism]; some of Ibn Abī l-Dunyā's (d. 281/894) ascetical writings, and Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī's (d. 458/1066) *Kitāb al-zuhd al-kabīr* [The Great Book of Asceticism].[56]

Drawing on this material, Ibn 'Asākir portrays Jesus throughout his biography as an austere ascetic, someone who avoided all the pleasures of this world—particularly the company of women, whom Jesus, according to Ibn 'Asākir, classified in the same category as demons[57]—and who enjoined his followers to flee the temptations of this world and seek the ultimate good of the world to come. Ibn 'Asākir sought to depict Jesus as the model of extreme asceticism, not merely as a "normal" ascetic, with the following

[54]See R. David Kaylor, *Jesus the Prophet* (Louisville: Westminster Press, 1994), 114, 181, 195.

[55]Of such references in the New Testament, Jesus said to Simon and Andrew: "Come after me and I will make you fishers of people" (Matthew 4:19). In another instance, Jesus said, describing John the Baptist and himself: "For John came, neither eating nor drinking, and they say: 'He is possessed.' The Son of man came, eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.'": (Matthew 11:18–19).

[56]I infer this from the identification of some of the ascetic reports in the biography of Jesus in their original sources. Ibn 'Asākir only names his informants, not their written works, and on the basis of this I have tried to locate the report in the work of the authority whom Ibn 'Asākir quotes.

[57]*TMD*, XLVII, 428; *TMDM*, 143–44 (nos. 141–42).

passage, which portrays Jesus in such a way that there was almost nothing left for him to do, for he apparently abstained from everything that pertains to this world:

> Jesus son of Mary used to eat barley, walk on foot and did not ride donkeys. He did not live in a house, nor did he use lamps for light. He neither dressed in cotton, nor touched women, nor used perfume. He never mixed his drink with anything, nor cooled it. He never greased or washed his hair or his beard. [When he slept,] he never had anything between his skin and the ground [on which he lay], except his garment. He had no concern for lunch or dinner, and coveted nothing of the desires of this world. He used to consort with the weak, the chronically sick and the poor. Whenever food was offered him on [a platter], he would place it on the ground, and he never ate meat. Of food, he ate little, saying: "[Even] this is too much for one who has to die and answer for his deeds."[58]

Ibn 'Asākir's depiction of Jesus as a rigorous ascetic is supported with quotations from Muslim ascetic lore, and covers almost one-sixth of his biography. Ibn 'Asākir clearly endorsed the idea of Jesus as an ascetic model, placing the main emphasis on this aspect of his character. In so doing, Ibn 'Asākir made Jesus say and do things he may never have said or done, but which Muslims in Ibn 'Asākir's time, and even before, wished him to have said or done.

The emphasis on the ascetic dimension of the earthly career of Jesus might also have been triggered by the fact that the Muslims' defeat at the hands of the Crusaders was perceived to be the consequent result of their political rivalries and their preoccupation with worldly gains. Through the mouth of Jesus, Ibn 'Asākir expressed his frustration with the Muslims, especially the political establishment, by admonishing them and condemning their preoccupation with this world. Moreover, by focusing on Jesus' ascetic way of life, Ibn 'Asākir hoped that Jesus' example could serve as a religious exhortation to Muslims, which would motivate them to renounce their preoccupation with this world so that they could attend to the holy war against the Crusaders.

[58]*TMD*, XLVII, 417–18; *TMDM*, 129 (no. 113).

Conclusion

One can best rename the biography of Jesus in *TMD* as "Jesus according to Ibn 'Asākir". For Ibn 'Asākir, the claim that Jesus was a Muslim prophet needed support from the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* lore. It was not a major concern for him to quote only well-authenticated *ḥadīth*s or reports; rather, what mattered most for Ibn 'Asākir was that the more the *ḥadīth* or report stressed the relationship between Jesus and Muḥammad, the better it suited his intended purpose.

Although Islam stresses that all Biblical or ancient Arab prophets were Muslims, they were figures of the past and were dealt with as such by Muslim scholars, including Ibn 'Asākir. However, Jesus' anticipated second coming makes him unique among these prophets—he alone would have a future role in history. Hence there was a need to dissociate him from his historical background, accuse his followers of having become infidels, and accordingly reshape him as a Muslim prophet who would side with the Muslims. Apparently, for Ibn 'Asākir, the challenge of the Crusades necessitated the reshaping of Jesus' biography with more ascetic themes—themes that are less prevalent in the "Tales of the Prophets" literature than in the ascetic (*zuhd*) literature favored by Ibn 'Asākir.

The prophecy of Jesus' triumphant return discussed above, the elements of which were redrafted from earlier stories, reflects what was going on in the mind of Ibn 'Asākir when he considered Jesus as a candidate for *TMD*. First, Ibn 'Asākir wanted to collect as much material about Jesus as he possibly could that praised the merits of Damascus—material he did not include in the biography *per se*, but at the beginning of *TMD*. Second, Ibn 'Asākir was preoccupied with the challenge of the Crusades, and thus he wanted to make the distinction between Jesus' true followers and his historical followers. For that purpose Jesus was depicted as a Muslim prophet, who preached Islam and whose true followers remained Muslims until the errant followers of Jesus persecuted and killed them.

Third, Ibn 'Asākir was apparently convinced that the Muslims had become so preoccupied with this world and its pleasures that they failed to face the invading Crusaders and protect the land of Islam. Condemning this world was a form of reaction on Ibn 'Asākir's part that he articulated through the mouth of the future savior Jesus. Since he was so keen to draw his new image of Jesus in keeping with his own religious and political preoccupations, one infers that it was essential for Ibn 'Asākir to present Jesus as an ascetic,

in some cases an austere one, who always renounced and condemned this world, and enjoined his followers to be "passersby". Therefore, by imitating Jesus' ascetic way of life, Ibn 'Asākir thought that the Muslims would have a greater chance of success in their religious struggle against the invaders.

Fourth, Ibn 'Asākir, puzzled by the implication of the Crusaders' defeat of the Muslims, may have considered it a sign of the end of days. Hence he used his biography of Jesus to promote him as the expected Mahdī, whose task it would be to kill the Antichrist, save the people of this world and conclude the total triumph of Islam. Although Ibn 'Asākir knew that the Mahdī should be a descendant of Muḥammad, he wanted to give this mission to Jesus—to Christ who would kill the Antichrist, and whose second coming would be in Damascus.

Finally, Ibn 'Asākir recorded almost all of his material about Jesus, some of which it seems he was the first to introduce in Syria, from sources prior to his day. Ibn 'Asākir wanted his Jesus to be peculiar in certain aspects, and for that reason, his use of the early Muslim sources was also peculiar. He rearranged this material to fit his intended purpose of relating Jesus to the political and religious conflict with the Crusaders. Ibn 'Asākir did not seek Jesus in the traditional "Tales of the Prophets"; rather, he sought him in other genres of Muslim lore, mainly in the *ḥadīth* and in ascetic literature. By so doing, he had the final word on the form in which Jesus was to be presented.

3

‘Uthmān and the Rāshidūn Caliphs in Ibn ‘Asākir’s *Ta’rīkh madīnat Dimashq*: a Study in Strategies of Compilation

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Introduction

The study of the origins of Islam is, from the perspective of the historian, fraught with difficulty.[1] The life of the prophet Muḥammad, the actions of his first successors as rulers of the young community of Believers, the story of the new community's rapid expansion in southwest Asia and north Africa, the history of the community itself as it grew, evolved, and became embroiled in civil wars, are all historical phenomena for which truly contemporary historical documentation is almost completely lacking. For the first 60 years of the Islamic era, we have as documents only some coins and a few scattered papyri and inscriptions, and most of these documents, while helpful, hail from the latter portion of this 60-year period.

A limited number of contemporary texts written by people outside the early community of Believers make passing reference to the Believers, or more rarely offer a brief description of how they came to be; some were penned by Christian clerics in Palestine, Armenia, or elsewhere, others by Jews. These

[1] A fuller discussion of the issues treated in the next several paragraphs is found in my *Narratives of Islamic Origins: the Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1998), esp. 1–31.

sources warrant the closest attention of scholars, to be sure, but are certainly not without drawbacks as evidence for Islamic origins. For one thing, as the writings of “outsiders” to the community of Believers, the original texts themselves may reflect religious or political agendas, of the nature of which we are only dimly aware. Moreover, although they date—or are said to date—to the period of Islamic origins themselves, what actually survive are later copies that have been transmitted by—and, therefore, perhaps “corrected”, redacted, or merely garbled by—later generations of scribes.[2]

The third documentary, or quasi-documentary, source for Islamic origins is the text of the Qur’ān itself. Although it seems likely that the Qur’ān text is, in fact, a text of great antiquity that hails from the earliest days of the community of Believers, it must be frankly stated that, for the historian, the Qur’ān is hardly an “open book”. The vaguely allusive quality of many Qur’ānic passages makes it difficult to attach them definitively to any concrete historical event. The fact that the text of the Qur’ān contains a wide variety of unresolved lexical and grammatical difficulties further undermines the historian's confidence in his or her ability to reconstruct sequences of past events from the sacred text.

This meagre supply of documentary evidence for Islamic origins, however, is matched by a correspondingly luxuriant growth of “literary” accounts about Islam's beginnings produced by Muslims and mainly couched in the Arabic language. By “literary” accounts I mean narratives, poems, and other bits of information that purport to be contemporary (usually eyewitness) information about the origins period, but which were written down only later, and which survive in a wide variety of texts compiled anywhere from a century to many centuries after the origins period. This vast supply of reports formed the basis of the traditional Muslim view of Islamic origins, and Western historians, until very recently, have accepted the general outlines of this picture either wholly uncritically, or with what we might call minor cosmetic surgery. However, the fact that these reports were only recorded later than the events they describe, and then copied by generations of scribes before reaching the manuscripts that actually exist today, raises the spectre of unintentional garbling or intentional redaction, which should make historians wary of relying on these sources as though they had documentary

[2] These non-Islamic sources are conveniently assembled in English translation, with valuable commentary and analysis, in Robert Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: a Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1997).

value. As these literary sources have become better known and more closely scrutinized, indeed, historians have discovered in some reports evidence of contradictions, or even of manipulation or outright invention, apparently introduced with sectarian or dogmatic intent. Some recent authors have even argued that these literary sources can tell us nothing about Islamic origins at all. This is probably going much too far, but what is clear is that if the historian is to utilize the literary sources to understand Islamic origins, he or she must first subject the sources themselves to meticulous analysis in order to establish, if possible, the degree of veracity of individual reports.

A massive compilation like Ibn 'Asākir's *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq*, which contains virtually countless reports about individuals and events of early Islamic history, provides an obvious case in point.[3] A repository of accounts it certainly is, but what kind of repository? Surely, we can no longer blithely assume it to be a "neutral" repository. Several studies, notably the late Marilyn Waldman's book *Toward a Theory of Historical Narrative: a Case Study in Perso-Islamicate Historiography*,[4] have cautioned us against simply "mining" compilations such as those of al-Ṭabarī or Ibn 'Asākir for useful nuggets of historical information, as if they were random (or, even more implausibly, representative) samplings of such information. To evaluate such accounts effectively, we must understand something of the author's intentions and objectives in compiling such a work, and not just accept the information he provides at face value.

The task of ferreting out a compiler's political or religious agenda thus becomes a matter of first importance, but it is usually a difficult task because the compilers seldom offer an explicit declaration of their own viewpoint. Moreover, a compiler's agenda is seldom readily apparent, because such works, by virtue of the very fact that they are compilations of older reports of diverse kinds, almost never speak with one voice. The existence in a compilation of reports representing contending points of view (sometimes, indeed, mutually contradictory ones) obscures the intentions and agenda of the compiler himself, and may delude us into thinking that,

[3] I will merely note in passing here that Ibn 'Asākir's text is valuable not only because of its information on early Islamic history, but also because it contains rich information on individuals and events, particularly those of Syria, during the third–fifth centuries AH; for, if the story of Islamic origins is sometimes seen only through a glass darkly, the people and events of 'Abbāsid and Ṭūlūnid Syria are all too frequently not to be seen at all. See Paul M. Cobb's contribution to this volume, 100–126.

[4] Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1980.

in fact he does not have any agenda or that his agenda can safely be ignored.

In what follows, I will attempt to show that we can gain some sense of a compiler's objectives by paying attention to what I will call the STRATEGIES OF COMPILATION he employs in presenting individual accounts—in particular strategies of SELECTION, of PLACEMENT, of REPETITION, and of MANIPULATION, this last referring to cases in which the compiler alters a received text by adding something, deleting something, or otherwise changing the wording of the "original" account in some way.[5] As we shall see, Ibn 'Asākir appears to employ each of these strategies in varying degrees, and in ways that can lead us to a better understanding of his religious and political agenda.

Even with such tools in hand, however, the massive size of *TMD* poses an obvious practical problem; how are we to attack such a vast collection, with any confidence of being able to render judgment on it before God renders judgment on us? The obvious stratagem is to break its contents down into smaller and more manageable units of analysis, despite the fact that doing so will, inevitably, provide us with only limited, and perhaps with distorted, results. The present article limits itself to consideration of the *TMD*'s portrayal of the first four caliphs (the Rāshidūn or "rightly guided" caliphs, in Sunnī historiography): Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (r. 11–13/632–634), 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 13–23/634–644), 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān (r. 23–35/644–656), and 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (r. 35–40/656–661).[6] To limit the material even further, it focuses mainly on accounts about the third caliph, 'Uthmān, whose biographical entry occupies all of Volume XXXIX of the Dār al-fikr edition (about 540 pages). It seemed likely that the accounts about 'Uthmān would provide a good testing-ground for Ibn 'Asākir and his compilation; for not only was 'Uthmān for obvious reasons the most problematic and controversial caliph in the entire Islamic tradition, he was also an Umayyad, and so a figure that might be expected to have been of special interest in Syria, and hence, to Ibn 'Asākir. I will rely, however, on occasional comparison with the text's treatment of Abū Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Alī, as well as a few other figures, to help highlight some of my findings on the depiction of 'Uthmān.

In carrying out my analysis, furthermore, I have tried to answer two questions:

[5] The last might also be called a strategy of redaction.

[6] See Appendix E for a listing of Ibn 'Asākir's biographies of the four Rāshidūn caliphs.

1. Did Ibn 'Asākir place special emphasis on accounts about the Rāshidūn that were directly relevant to Syria? In other words, by comparison with other sources of information on these caliphs (such as al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk* [The History of Prophets and Kings], al-Balādhurī's *Futūḥ al-buldān* [The Book of Conquests] or *Ansāb al-ashrāf* [The Genealogies of Notables], etc.) does Ibn 'Asākir seem to *leave out* accounts that are important for a balanced understanding of a caliph or his policies, but which have no direct bearing on Syria?

2. Does Ibn 'Asākir's treatment of the Rāshidūn suggest that he held a particular *political or sectarian attitude* toward each caliph?

The Strategies of Ibn 'Asākir

The answer to the first question—the extent to which Ibn 'Asākir's selection of accounts about the Rāshidūn places special emphasis on those that were directly relevant to Syria—is decidedly mixed, and leads us directly to a consideration of Ibn 'Asākir's STRATEGY OF SELECTION. On the one hand, in the biographies of Abū Bakr and 'Umar, *TMD* unquestionably does include more information on the conquest of Syria, for example, than it does on the conquest of Iraq or other areas.[7] This Syro-centric quality is particularly apparent when one compares the contents of *TMD* with other compilations, such as al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rīkh* or al-Balādhurī's *Futūḥ*. It seems clear that, in general, Ibn 'Asākir selected particularly accounts dealing with Syria for inclusion in his compilation. On the other hand, *TMD* does not simply limit itself to accounts describing events in Syria, nor even to accounts relating to events of direct importance to Syria; in this respect, *TMD* is quite different from some other biographical dictionaries, such as al-Qushayrī's *Ta'rīkh al-Raqqa* [History of Raqqa] or Bahshal's *Ta'rīkh Wāsiṭ* [History of Wāsiṭ], which have a very tight geographical focus. Rather, *TMD* includes, for example, many accounts about events in Medina, at least in the biographies of the Rāshidūn caliphs, who spent most of their time in Medina. In this it resembles some other very large compilations, such as the *Bughyat al-ṭalab fī ta'rīkh Ḥalab* [Everything Desirable about the History of Aleppo] of Kamāl

[7]This can most readily be seen by comparing the footnotes of Chapters 3 (on the conquest of Syria) and 4 (on the conquest of Iraq) in my *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); *TMD* is cited frequently in the former, but shows up only occasionally in the latter.

al-Dīn Ibn al-'Adīm, in the larger biographies of which we also find reports of biographees' activities outside Syria.[8]

This curious quality of *TMD*—that it emphasizes Syria without focusing exclusively on it—suggests that Ibn 'Asākir was simultaneously pursuing two objectives in selecting accounts for inclusion in his biographical entries, especially when dealing with figures of major importance, such as the Rāshidūn caliphs. One was to report as fully as possible events in Syria itself; the other was to present major figures fully enough so that his readers could obtain from his compilation a comprehensive overview of them as historical actors. In particular, he seems to want to give enough material to enable readers to make what we might call moral evaluations of each major figure. In pursuit of this second objective, Ibn 'Asākir included many accounts that have no direct bearing on Syria, but that do fill in the general picture of each figure *as caliph*, as reflected both in his actions and decisions while in office, and in his personal temperament and moral virtue, whether in office or beforehand.[9]

A quick glance at the entry on another important figure from early Islamic history—in this case not a caliph, but the general Khālid ibn al-Walīd[10]—confirms that Ibn 'Asākir selected accounts with the double agenda of emphasizing events in Syria and of offering accounts that provide insight on the temperament and morality of the subject. Khālid's campaigns in Iraq are hardly mentioned in his biography, but many accounts deal with (or at least situate him) in Syria. These include reports about the raid on Mu'ta, the conquest of Damascus, the conquest of Qinnasrīn, and especially about the caliph 'Umar's dismissal of Khālid as commander in Syria.[11] In this case, however, another striking feature of Ibn 'Asākir's selection emerges. Although he does provide a few accounts that can be termed straightforward descriptions of events,[12] a far greater number of the reports he includes seem to be using some known historical context simply as a plausible setting for anecdotes whose main purpose is to convey an impression of Khālid's per-

[8]Ibn al-'Adīm, *Bughyat al-ṭalab fī ta'rīkh Ḥalab*, 11 vols., ed. Suhayl Zakkār (Damascus: Dār al-ba'th, 1409/1988).

[9]This material belongs to what I have elsewhere (following A. Noth) called the historiographical theme of *sīrat al-khulafā'*, or personal characterization. See my *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, 190–95.

[10]His *tarjama* is found in *TMD*, XVI, 216–82.

[11]On Mu'ta, *ibid.*, XVI, 248–49; for the others, *ibid.*, XVI, 261–65.

[12]E.g. the short report of Ibn Lahī'a, *ibid.*, XVI, 260–61.

sonal or moral qualities.[13] For example, a report of Qays ibn Abī Khālid depicts Khālid relating how at Mu'ta he came to have a certain sword;[14] another describes his miraculous changing of his soldiers' wine into vinegar by simply saying: "May God make it vinegar!"[15] In any case, the prevalence of such "moralizing" accounts suggests that Ibn 'Asākir's *highest* priority may have been collecting accounts that revealed the personal characteristics of his biographees, including the attitude of the Prophet towards them,[16] and that relating information about events in Syria itself was of secondary importance.[17]

We shall have reason to comment further on Ibn 'Asākir's strategy of selection in what follows,[18] but it is already clear that it plays an important role in shaping the general outlines and point of view of his compilation as a whole. It is also clear, however, that his strategy of selection can only be discerned by comparison of his compilation with others—he never states explicitly what his criteria of selection are. Broadly speaking, moreover, this is true of most such compilations. On rare occasions, a compiler will drop a casual comment that makes clear that a conscious strategy of selection was being pursued, as when al-Ṭabarī informs us (in a passage buried in the middle of his *Ta'rīkh*) that "we have mentioned many of the reasons that ['Uthmān's] murderers cited as an excuse for killing him, and we have avoided mentioning many others that should not be included here."[19] (Note that even here, al-Ṭabarī does not state explicitly what his criteria for inclusion were; he merely states that some things "should not be included here".)

[13]Elsewhere I have termed this procedure HISTORICIZATION. See *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, 209–14.

[14]*TMD*, XVI, 248–49; perhaps related to his famous epithet "the sword of God" (*sayf Allāh*), supposedly given him by the Prophet: see *ibid.*, XVI, 243.

[15]*Ibid.*, XVI, 252–53.

[16]In Khālid's case, Prophetic testimonials occur in the first half of his biography.

[17]On this tendency, see also James E. Lindsay, "Caliphal and Moral Exemplar?: 'Alī ibn 'Asākir's Portrait of Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya," *Der Islam* 74 (1997), 250–78.

[18]See below, 60–61.

[19]Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1879–1901), I, 2980; trans. R.S. Humphreys, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, XV: *The Crisis of the Early Caliphate: the Reign of 'Uthmān* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 181. Another example occurs at the beginning of Ibn Hishām's recension of Ibn Isḥāq's *Sīra*, where Ibn Hishām informs us that he will relate what Ibn Isḥāq had written about the Prophet, except "...things which it is disgraceful to discuss; matters which would distress certain people...." etc. See Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat rasūl Allāh*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1858–60), 3–4; trans. Alfred Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 691.

More interesting by far is the evidence bearing on the second question: Does Ibn 'Asākir's handling of accounts suggest that he held a particular political or sectarian attitude toward the Rāshidūn caliphs? The answer appears to be a resounding "yes", but in order to appreciate this fully, we must first describe the format that Ibn 'Asākir follows in compiling his biographical entries, particularly lengthy ones such as those of the Rāshidūn caliphs. Each biography contains: 1) the subject's full name (going back to his clan within Quraysh); 2) a few sentences stating in brief how and when he had contact with Syria; 3) lists of those from whom he related *ḥadīths* and those who related *ḥadīths* from him; 4) a few selected *ḥadīths* he related; 5) detailed information about the subject's contacts with Syria before Islam, if any; 6) detailed information about the subject's genealogy, including (sometimes) marriage ties, and sometimes giving capsule summaries—on the order of one sentence—mentioning the perceived highlights of his life; 7) personal traits, both physical and temperamental; 8) sayings of the Prophet about him; and 9) detailed accounts about his life and the events in which he was involved, usually more or less in chronological order, including many anecdotes that seem to have as their main purpose displaying the subject's personal qualities.[20]

When we look through the accounts about 'Uthmān in particular, we discern some striking patterns that are highlighted by comparison with the *TMD*'s biographies of other Rāshidūn, or by comparison with sources other than *TMD*. These patterns make it clear that while Ibn 'Asākir wishes to portray all the Rāshidūn in a fairly positive light, he seems especially concerned to provide a selection of material that portrays 'Uthmān in a positive way. Perhaps the most obvious evidence of this is to be found in the few *ḥadīths* of the Prophet that each of the Rāshidūn is reported to have conveyed; keep in mind that these sample *ḥadīths* are generally the first information in *khabar* format contained in each biography, following the tabulation of ancestors, teachers, and students, and so strike the reader with special force. Abū Bakr relates something he said to the Prophet while hiding from the Meccan posse

[20]In the entry for 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, for example, the Prophet asks those around him what he should do with the captives from the battle of Badr; Abū Bakr says that he should treat them leniently because they are his kinsmen, but 'Umar—in keeping with the tradition's portrayal of him as a strict disciplinarian—argues that they had expelled him from Mecca and fought him, so he should behead them (*TMD*, XLIV, 56).

during the *hijra*, and the Apostle's reply.[21] 'Umar is said to have related a *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet curses the Jews of Arabia.[22] 'Alī's biography offers two *ḥadīths* conveyed by 'Alī, one listing a number of oaths declared by the Prophet (e.g. "May God curse whoever curses his parents"), and the other providing details of ritual purity.[23] The first, however, is preceded by a passage in which 'Alī, when asked, angrily denies that he had received from the Prophet any secret or special knowledge that was not known to others in the community—a statement that certainly has potent political and theological implications and that can only be described as unabashedly anti-Shī'ī.[24] As for 'Uthmān's biography, the first substantive account in it is the following *ḥadīth*, which 'Uthmān reportedly heard from the Prophet: "Whoever dies while he is bearing witness that there is no god but God shall enter Paradise...."[25] This *ḥadīth*, too, has significant implications, above all for 'Uthmān himself, and it would be naive to assume that its appearance here is the result of mere happenstance. Given the fact that 'Uthmān was routinely reported to have been killed while reading the Qur'ān, the effect of this particular *ḥadīth* is to plant in the reader's mind at the outset the idea that 'Uthmān must have entered Paradise, which effectively casts doubt on the claims by his opponents that he had sinned so grievously that his blood was licit. We can observe Ibn 'Asākir here employing a STRATEGY OF PLACEMENT to highlight the significance of these accounts; that is, by putting these *ḥadīths* in an especially prominent position, they may serve almost as a motto for the whole biography to follow.

Another striking pattern emerges in the section of each biography dealing with the subject's genealogy and "capsule summaries" of their lives. In 'Uthmān's case, the fact that he married two of the Prophet's daughters—Ruqayya, and later Umm Kulthūm—comes up a number of times;[26] in other accounts the Prophet says that he would marry them to him again, and if he had a third available daughter he would marry her to 'Uthmān also;[27] or

[21] *Ibid.*, XXX, 4.
[22] *Ibid.*, XLIV, 4.
[23] *Ibid.*, XLII, 5.
[24] *Ibid.*, XLII, 4–5. It is worth remembering here, however, that the *TMD*'s lengthy entry on 'Alī contains many hagiographical traditions about 'Alī that can only be described as very pro-Shī'ī.
[25] *Ibid.*, XXXIX, 4.
[26] *Ibid.*, XXXIX, 5, 8, 35.
[27] E.g. *ibid.*, XXXIX, 43–44.

that if he had had 40 daughters, he would have married them one by one to 'Uthmān until none was left;[28] or that his marriage to 'Uthmān's daughters was ordered by Revelation.[29] At first encounter, this information seems to be merely the recitation of well-known fact and, as such, unremarkable; but comparison with the biography of 'Alī suggests otherwise. In the ten pages dealing with 'Alī's genealogy, the Prophet's daughter Fāṭima is mentioned only three times, and even in those instances 'Alī's marriage to her is not the main point of the account;[30] one other account notes that he was son-in-law (*khatan*) of the Apostle, but does not mention Fāṭima by name.[31] Since Ibn 'Asākir relates other "basic facts" about 'Alī's life repeatedly in this section—including 'Alī's status as the first male convert to Islam, his participation in the Prophet's major campaigns, his murder by Ibn Muljam, and even, repeatedly, his mother's name and genealogy and social connections—it appears that Ibn 'Asākir may have been trying to downplay 'Alī's connection with the Prophet via Fāṭima. By comparison, Ibn 'Asākir's desire to emphasize 'Uthmān's marriage ties to the Prophet becomes apparent.

If, after reading these first sections of 'Uthmān's biography in *TMD*, we still have any doubts about Ibn 'Asākir's intent to offer us an overwhelmingly positive picture of 'Uthmān, the accounts in which the Prophet himself says favorable things about 'Uthmān lay these doubts to rest. First of all, various kinds of Prophetic endorsements of 'Uthmān form a large chunk of the text—amounting to about 200 pages in the Dār al-fikr edition. (Remember that the whole biography of 'Uthmān in this edition of *TMD* is 540 pages long.) These accounts are of many kinds. In some, the Prophet tells 'Uthmān that he would hold the caliphate someday after his own (i.e. Muḥammad's) death, but that a group of hypocrites (*munāfiqūn*) would seek to deprive him of it.[32] Others involve favorable comparisons with, or associations with, other "good" figures. A striking example is the following report:[33]

[28] *Ibid.*, XXXIX, 42.
[29] *Ibid.*, XXXIX, 41–44.
[30] *Ibid.*, XLII, 16; XLII, 17, 18 (both accounts offering explanations of 'Alī's epithet, "Abū Turāb").
[31] *Ibid.*, XLII, 16.
[32] E.g. *ibid.*, XXXIX, 290.
[33] *Ibid.*, XXXIX, 133–34; other versions are found 134–48. In *TMD*, XXXIX, 149–51, occur versions in which the Prophet, in a different setting, announces to the three men that they would attain Paradise. The *isnād* for the report cited here is: a) Abū l-Qāsim al-Shaybānī ← Abū 'Alī al-Tamīmī ← Aḥmad ibn Ja'far ← 'Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad ← my father ← Yazīd ibn Hārūn ← , and b) Abū l-Faḍl al-Fuḍaylī ← Abū l-Qāsim al-Khalīlī

> Nāfiʿ ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥārith said: I went out with the Apostle of God. He entered a walled garden and said to me: "Close the door behind me." Then he went in and sat on the bench around a well, dangling his two legs into the well. Someone knocked on the door, so I asked: "Who is it?" The reply came: "Abū Bakr." So I said: "O Apostle of God, it's Abū Bakr," whereupon he said: "Let him come in, and give him tidings of Paradise." Consequently I let him in and told him [he would go to] Paradise; he entered and sat with the Apostle of God on the bench, dangling his two legs in the well. Then [again] someone knocked on the door, so I asked: "Who is it?" The reply came: "ʿUmar." So I said: "O Apostle of God, it's ʿUmar," whereupon he said: "Let him come in, and give him tidings of Paradise." Consequently I let him in and told him [he would go to] Paradise; he entered and sat with the Apostle of God on the bench, dangling his two legs in the well. Then [for a third time] someone knocked on the door, so I asked: "Who is it?" The reply came: "ʿUthmān." So I said: "O Apostle of God, it's ʿUthmān," whereupon he said: "Let him come in, and give him tidings of Paradise, but misfortune with it."[34] Consequently I let him in and told him [he would go to] Paradise; he entered and sat with the Apostle of God on the bench, dangling his two legs in the well."

Particularly noteworthy in this report are the arrival of the three visitors in the order in which they would eventually rule, the Prophet's prediction that ʿUthmān, no less than Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, would go to Paradise—and, of course, the omission of ʿAlī from the series.

Testimonials on ʿUthmān's behalf are not limited to those offered by the Prophet; ʿUthmān's successor, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, is also reported to have defended ʿUthmān's reputation. So we find accounts in which ʿAlī (paraphrasing the Qur'ān) declares that ʿUthmān was one who "believed and did good works",[35] and elsewhere he declares that ʿUthmān "was one of

← Abū l-Qāsim al-Khuzāʿī ← al-Haytham ibn Kulayb ← ʿĪsā ibn Aḥmad al-ʿAsqalānī ← Yazīd, both from: Muḥammad ibn ʿAmr ← Abū Salama.

[34]Some variant accounts in *ibid.*, XXXIX, 134–35, have at this point: "...give him tidings of Paradise, but he will meet with misfortune," or "...give him tidings of Paradise, after severe misfortune."

[35]*Ibid.*, XXXIX, 465. Cf. Sūrat al-Mā'ida (5), v. 95.

the best and choicest among us".[36] Elsewhere, ʿAlī states that if ʿUthmān had sent him to Ṣirār, he would have heeded and obeyed,[37] thereby making clear his devotion to ʿUthmān. Another report goes as follows:[38]

> A man came to [ʿAlī] and said: "I really hate ʿUthmān!" But [ʿAlī] said: "Easy! For they—meaning the Companions of the Prophet and the unbelievers—are the very ones about whom God revealed [the verses]: 'Those who bear the Throne, and those round about it proclaim the praise of their Lord, and believe in Him, and they ask forgiveness for those who believe...' [referring to] the Companions of the Prophet, 'so forgive them, they repented from disbelief [*shirk*] and followed the Apostle.' [And the Qur'ān goes on] to 'It shall be proclaimed to the unbelievers: ["Surely God's hatred is greater than your hatred one of another...."],' so be careful not to be among [the unbelievers], by hating him."

It hardly needs to be pointed out that accounts of this kind, by emphasizing not only ʿUthmān's favor with God but also his admission to Paradise, help undermine the Shīʿī claim that the caliphate of ʿUthmān, like that of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, was a usurpation of ʿAlī's rightful claim to rule. But these accounts, while anti-Shīʿī, are not narrowly pro-Umayyad;[39] rather, they advance the idea, favored by later Sunnī doctrine, that all Companions of the Prophet were moral exemplars. ʿAlī recognizes ʿUthmān's virtue and legitimacy, but by doing so he also affirms what Sunnīs would see as his own virtue and lack of exclusive claims to political authority; it thus becomes unthinkable that the strife of the First Civil War could have been the result of

[36]*la-qad kāna min khayrinā wa-aṣlinā*; *TMD*, XXXIX, 468–69.

[37]*Ibid.*, XXXIX, 361. Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān* (Beirut: Dār ṣādir, 1399/1979), s.v. "Ṣirār", lists several localities near Medina with this name, which basically means a high place devoid of water. The implication of the passage is that the chore would be in some way arduous or unpleasant.

[38]*TMD*, XXXIX, 468 middle. The *isnād* is: Abū l-Qāsim al-Samarqandī ← Abū l-Ḥusayn ibn al-Naqqūr ← Abū Ṭāhir al-Mukhalliṣ ← Abū Bakr ibn Sayf ← al-Sarī [ibn Yaḥyā] ← Shuʿayb ibn Ibrāhīm ← Sayf ← ʿUmar ← ʿAṭīya ← Abū Ayyūb ← ʿAlī. The Qur'ānic verses quoted are Sūrat Ghāfir (40), vs. 7 and 10 respectively; the translation of the verses is that of A.J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (New York: Macmillan, 1976), II, 175–76.

[39]Although, as pointed out to me by Lawrence Conrad, the account cited in the preceding note may be construed as exclusively pro-Umayyad if we understand *aṣlinā* to mean "the best of us in descent".

his own ambition or of an exclusive claim. This point of view is reinforced by other accounts in which 'Alī pointedly refuses to join the mutineers besieging 'Uthmān, as in the following:[40]

> When the Egyptians came to Medina, a delegation of them came to 'Alī, saying: "Rise [in rebellion] with us." He replied: "By God, I shall not arise with you," whereupon they asked: "Then why did you write to us?" ['Alī] replied: "By God, I never wrote you anything!" At this they looked at one another and said: "Do you [want to] be angry with this one, or fight the other?"[41] [Then] 'Alī went out and encamped outside the city.

Here 'Alī is exculpated from any role in the mutiny; he denies that he had written to them (to incite them) and retires from the city before the mutineers do their deed. It is noteworthy that 'Alī's denial that he had written to the mutineers seems to be lifted from a longer, anti-'Uthmān account;[42] in the present report, however, the effect is definitely to present both 'Uthmān and his fellow Companion of the Prophet, 'Alī, as innocent of serious wrongdoing in the mutiny.

The painful divisions of the First Civil War were, then, by implication the result of machinations by figures other than 'Uthmān, unsavory characters with dubious motivations. Some accounts name the ringleaders of the Egyptian and Iraqi dissidents by name, or attach the blame to that stock figure of disrepute in Sunnī circles, 'Abd Allāh ibn Saba'.[43] Many, however, simply describe the mutineers in general terms: *munāfiqūn* ("hypocrites"), a good Qur'ānic pejorative, is sometimes used;[44] in another account, the mob that joins the delegation of dissidents in Medina in besieging 'Uthmān's house is called the "dregs of the people".[45] Again, the point seems to be to insulate the "real" (or at least the prominent) Companions of the Prophet from any

[40] *TMD*, XXXIX, 360–61.

[41] The Arabic is vexing: *a-li-hādhā taghḍabūna am li-hādhā tuqātilūna*? I have chosen to render the two demonstrative pronouns as referring to 'Alī and 'Uthmān, respectively, but they might both be taken to refer to 'Alī, in which case we should translate: "Should you be angry with this one, or fight him?"

[42] Versions of this longer account are cited below in nn. 51–52.

[43] *TMD*, XXXIX, 300–301. On 'Abd Allāh ibn Saba', see M.G.S. Hodgson, art. "Abd Allāh ibn Saba'" in *EI* 2, I, 51a–b.

[44] *TMD*, XXXIX, 290.

[45] *Ḥuthāla min al-nās*: *ibid.*, XXXIX, 360.

responsibility for the violence and bloodshed of the civil war. As this account goes on to note: "the Companions of the Prophet who forsook 'Uthmān hated *fitna* [temptation, strife], and had no idea that the matter would end in his murder; they [later] came to regret what they had done in this case...." In other words, the Companions made the innocent mistake of underestimating the villainy of the real culprits, but were not themselves accountable for 'Uthmān's murder and the unrest it unleashed in the community.

Numerous other accounts hint at the base worldly motivations of the mutineers. An especially interesting one relates how an orphan who was raised as a foster son by 'Uthmān joined the dissidents in Egypt. 'Uthmān was the guardian of all the orphans of his clan, whom he sustained from his own wealth. When 'Uthmān became caliph, the account tells us, this foster son approached 'Uthmān and asked to be granted a governorship; 'Uthmān refused, telling him bluntly that he was not qualified, but gave him money and helped him get started in business in what we might call the private sector in Egypt. Despite 'Uthmān's generosity, however, the foster son harbored a grudge against the caliph, and for this reason joined the insurrection against him.[46] This account not only portrays at least one of the insurgents as motivated by a purely selfish, excessive, and unjustified concern for vengeance, it also neatly undercuts the charge of nepotism that was sometimes leveled against 'Uthmān, since the foster son who was denied a governorship could certainly be seen as one of 'Uthmān's household.

As for the charge of nepotism itself, it seems seldom to occur in *TMD*. When it does occur, it comes toward the end of a long report, in a context in which 'Uthmān is answering the charge, along with others.[47] This may offer a further hint of Ibn 'Asākir's strategy of selection, and the religio-political point of view underlying it.

At this point we can turn to another salient feature of the *TMD*, its STRATEGY OF REPETITION. In 'Uthmān's biography, for example, we find that many of the "Prophetic testimonials" on behalf of 'Uthmān are repeated several, sometimes many, times in variants that may differ only slightly from one another, or that may be identical except for the *isnād*. This pattern is also found in other sections, for example, in the statements by 'Alī on 'Uthmān's behalf, or in the section of the text in which 'Uthmān himself,

[46] *Ibid.*, XXXIX, 303.

[47] *Ibid.*, XXXIX, 307–14, at top 314. Its *isnād*: Sayf ← Badr ibn al-Khalīl ← 'Uthmān ibn Quṭba al-Asadī ← a man of Banū Asad.

or someone else, confronts the mutineers with the prescient warning that if they killed the caliph, they would never pray together again, nor wage *jihād* together against an enemy, etc.[48] We are entitled to ask, I think, whether this duplication of virtually identical accounts merely reflects what was available; that is, that it is the innocent product of a desire on Ibn 'Asākir's part to be thorough and all-inclusive, or whether it is the product of intentional "padding" on his part designed to make the bulk of clearly positive accounts outweigh everything else; for such repetition is particularly noticeable in sections that contain relatively short accounts that are overwhelmingly positive in their portrayal of 'Uthmān. It may be that the repetition of a given account with varying *isnāds* is simply the traditionists' way of demonstrating that an account is *mutawāṭir* (conveyed by many varied chains of strong transmitters), and so reliable beyond all doubt.[49] The more I read of the *TMD*'s biographies of 'Uthmān and the other Rāshidūn, however, the more I am inclined to believe that Ibn 'Asākir was utilizing such a strategy of repetition to help steer his readers to the point of view he desired; for he pointedly does not reiterate the numerous variants of reports, found in some other collections, that cast doubt on 'Uthmān's motives or portray his actions in an unfavorable light.[50]

Ibn 'Asākir does not completely suppress, or fail to report, negative accounts about 'Uthmān. One finds, for example, a rather lengthy report in which 'Uthmān is clearly depicted as trying to double-cross the delegation of Egyptians who had come to complain to him by sending them back with promises to mend his ways, while secretly sending a messenger to his governor to execute the delegation upon its return.[51] This account is a shorter and somewhat milder version of a longer report found in the history of al-Ṭabarī,[52] but is still quite damaging to 'Uthmān's image. It is somewhat surprising to find it there at all, given the otherwise overwhelmingly positive nature of reports on 'Uthmān that are found in *TMD*. What strikes me most about this account, however, is the fact that it is buried in the middle of

[48]The last-mentioned are encountered in *ibid.*, XXXIX, 345–56.

[49]This possibility was suggested by Lawrence Conrad (personal communication).

[50]For example, cf. al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2983–84 (Ibn Isḥāq), 2984 (Ibn al-Kalbī), 2986–98 (Ibn Isḥāq), 2995–98 (al-Wāqidī).

[51]*TMD*, XXXIX, 323–24; it is also found in Khalīfa ibn Khayyāṭ al-'Uṣfūrī, *Ta'rīkh*, ed. Suhayl Zakkār (Damascus: Wizārat al-thiqāfa wa-l-siyāḥa wa-l-irshād al-qawmī, 1967), I, 181–82, who was Ibn 'Asākir's source for it.

[52]Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2963–65.

'Uthmān's 540-page biographical entry, the fact that it does not occur in numerous variants but rather seems to come up only once, and the fact that it is surrounded by other accounts that are very different in character—that is, that are favorable towards 'Uthmān—so that it gives the impression of being irregular, an aberration, and hence less trustworthy. This negative account about 'Uthmān is included, in other words, but under conditions that do much to neutralize its negative character; indeed, the conditions are such that many a reader, plowing sleepily through so many pages of pro-'Uthmān hagiography, might be forgiven for having missed the negative account entirely.

We are not quite done with this interesting account, however. As noted above, Ibn 'Asākir has included it in his *TMD*—perhaps it, or accounts like it, were too widely disseminated in his day for him to be able to leave it out?—but he has included a shortened version which omits some of the most damaging aspects of the longer version found in, for example, al-Ṭabarī. Even when conveying a report possibly distasteful to him, however, Ibn 'Asākir must receive high marks for the accuracy with which he transmits reports (as noted by at least two other contributors to this volume), for comparison of this account with the version in Khalīfa's *Ta'rīkh* reveals them to be exactly identical—that is, Ibn 'Asākir appears to have resisted the temptation to implement a STRATEGY OF MANIPULATION—i.e. redaction of an account he found awkward for religious or political reasons, to make it less objectionable. Indeed, by Ibn 'Asākir's day, open meddling with the received text of a report about the era of the Rāshidūn was probably unnecessary in any case; many accounts already circulated in several different tendentious variants, so that to convey his point of view Ibn 'Asākir merely had to *select* the version that seemed most consonant with his opinion, as, in this case, he chose to select Khalīfa's shorter, rather than al-Ṭabarī's longer, version of events. The phase of actual manipulation of received reports about the Rāshidūn, in other words, was probably much earlier, in the first–third centuries AH.

Conclusions

It is time to draw some conclusions; I should like to offer two sets of conclusions, one relating to the *TMD* itself, the other having implications beyond this particular text. At the beginning of this essay we noted that the selection of accounts found in the *TMD* suggests that it was assembled with two objectives in mind: first, to relate as much as possible about events and persons of Syria, and second, to provide sufficient "background information" about

major figures, such as the Rāshidūn, so that one could reach a comprehensive assessment—particularly a moral assessment—of those figures as historical actors. Our somewhat more detailed examination reveals that the second objective—offering a convincing moral picture of the Rāshidūn (and of other figures)—loomed much larger even than the goal of providing information about Syria. It also shows that we must add a third objective: a desire on Ibn ʿAsākir's part to paint a picture of the Rāshidūn and of the events in which they were involved that conformed to the dogma prevalent in Sunnī circles in his day, according to which all Companions of the Prophet—and certainly all Companions who played a major role in the central events of early Islamic history—were paragons of moral probity, insight, and dedication to the community.[53] This tendency shows up especially in Ibn ʿAsākir's apparent determination to portray ʿUthmān, the most controversial of the Rāshidūn, in an almost overwhelmingly positive light. As we have seen, the bulky biographical entry on ʿUthmān appears to contain very few accounts that are openly critical of him—far fewer, for example, than the relatively smaller set of accounts on ʿUthmān offered by al-Ṭabarī. Is this balance—or imbalance—in the *TMD* simply a reflection of the kind of material that was available in Syria when Ibn ʿAsākir made his compilation? Perhaps; but we must remember that Ibn ʿAsākir spent most of his twenties and early thirties traveling and studying in Iraq, the Ḥijāz, Khurāsān, Transoxiana, and Afghanistan. For this reason, it seems more likely that the balance of accounts reflects Ibn ʿAsākir's own desire to project a particular image of ʿUthmān, implemented through a STRATEGY OF SELECTION according to which he included overwhelmingly accounts that would steer readers to his point of view. Perhaps this is not very startling; as Nikita Elisséeff tells us, Ibn ʿAsākir was from a staunchly Sunnī family, and Nūr al-Dīn found him "a valuable ally in... implementing his programme of Sunnī reaction" against Shīʿism, both in its Fāṭimid and its Nizārī (Assassin) variants.[54] I, however, was startled by how clearly Ibn ʿAsākir's confessional precommitments show through in the text of the *TMD*, once I began to pay attention to the collection with such issues in mind.

[53]An early discussion of this tendency is found in Israel Friedlaender, "Muhammedanische Geschichtskonstruktionen," *Beiträge zur Kenntnis des Orients* 9 (1911), 17–34.

[54]Nikita Elisséeff, art. "Ibn ʿAsākir" in *EI*², III, 714a. See also James E. Lindsay, "ʿAlī ibn ʿAsākir as a Preserver of *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ*: the Case of David b. Jesse," *Studia Islamica* 82 (1995), 45–82, which discusses his goal of fitting Syria into the Sunnī "origins story".

The second set of conclusions begins with this text, but takes us beyond its confines. This examination of parts of Ibn ʿAsākir's *TMD* makes it much clearer to me how important what I have chosen to call strategies of selection, of repetition, and of placement are to the construction and content of a work such as this one. Much more light could be thrown on Ibn ʿAsākir's STRATEGIES OF SELECTION, of course, by undertaking an analysis of his sources, which could make clear which sources Ibn ʿAsākir favored for certain episodes, or likely sources that he failed to use, or used only in part. A detailed source analysis of this kind was beyond the scope of this essay, but should be given high priority in future research on the *TMD*. With regard to Ibn ʿAsākir's STRATEGIES OF REPETITION, we have seen how the duplication of identical or similar accounts of a certain kind can overwhelm or neutralize material conveying a different message. With regard to Ibn ʿAsākir's STRATEGIES OF PLACEMENT, we have seen him apparently burying a problematic account in a mass of accounts he doubtless found more palatable; we have also seen how, by placing a certain account in an especially prominent position—for example, as the first substantive account in an entry—he can enhance its effect and let it set the tone for the whole biography. These strategies appear to be just as important to the character of the *TMD* as the better-known STRATEGIES OF MANIPULATION; that is, the editing (redaction) of a given passage of text, which we have hardly considered here, partly because initial indications are that Ibn ʿAsākir favored the other techniques for conveying his point of view. These observations about Ibn ʿAsākir's *TMD* and how we should approach it are, however, probably valid also for other major compilations. Coming to grips with these strategies—of selection, of repetition, of placement, and of manipulation—must, I think, be at the top of our agenda when examining such compilations (especially, perhaps, the large and unwieldy ones) whether they be other biographical dictionaries, collections of *ḥadīth*s, books of *fatwā*s, or annalistic chronicles.

4

Sayf at First: the Transmission of Sayf ibn ʿUmar in al-Ṭabarī and Ibn ʿAsākir

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Introduction

Few figures of the early Arabic historiographical tradition have proved more vexing to work with than the enigmatic Sayf ibn ʿUmar (d. *ca.* 180/796).[1] The seminal role of Sayf's *Kitāb al-ridda wa-l-futūḥ* [The Book of the Wars of Apostasy and Conquests] in al-Ṭabarī's (d. 310/932) *Ta'rīkh* [History] has provided the impetus for studies on Sayf's reliability, his sources, and comparisons of his accounts with other author/compilers of the early period of Islamic history. Although there are no extant, complete recensions of Sayf's work to utilize in establishing his original *Kitāb al-ridda wa-l-futūḥ*—Sayf at first—large portions of the work have been preserved in Ibn ʿAsākir's (d. 571/1176) *TMD*.[2] As one would expect, Ibn ʿAsākir incorporates many of Sayf's accounts on the conquest period into his own section on the conquests in his introduction to *TMD*. Many of these accounts are the same accounts

[1] F.M. Donner, art. "Sayf ibn ʿUmar" in *EI* [2], IX, 102a–103a; al-Dhahabī, *Mīzān al-iʿtidāl fī naqd al-rijāl*, 4 vols., ed. A.M. al-Bijāwī (Cairo: ʿĪsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1963–64), II, 255–56; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Kitāb al-jarḥ wa-l-taʿdīl*, 4 vols. (Hyderabad: Dā'irat al-maʿārif al-ʿuthmāniya, 1941–53), II, 278; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 12 vols. (Hyderabad: Dā'irat al-maʿārif al-niẓāmīya, 1907–1909), IV, 295–96; Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, 11 vols. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967–proceeding), I, 311–12.

[2] Ibn ʿAsākir, *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 80 vols., ed. ʿUmar al-ʿAmrawī and ʿAlī Shīrī (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1995–2001).

used by al-Ṭabarī. However, in some of the individual biographies we find otherwise unknown Sayf accounts as well as versions of accounts that differ substantially from those in al-Ṭabarī.

This paper seeks to answer two basic questions that may help us establish "Sayf at first": 1) Were Ibn ʿAsākir and al-Ṭabarī working from the same recension of Sayf? 2) How can we account for the textual variations between the Sayf accounts in Ibn ʿAsākir and al-Ṭabarī? It is my contention that *isnād* and biographical evidence, combined with a textual comparison of Sayf's accounts in al-Ṭabarī with those in Ibn ʿAsākir, suggest that al-Ṭabarī and Ibn ʿAsākir were, in fact, using the same recension of Sayf. Moreover, this evidence also suggests that al-Ṭabarī, not Ibn ʿAsākir, was responsible for textual variations found between Sayf's accounts in al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rīkh* and Ibn ʿAsākir's *TMD*. The following sections will set forth, in turn, the *isnād*, biographical, and textual evidence for this conclusion.

Isnād Evidence

The identification of Sayf ibn ʿUmar's elusive sources is a topic that has long held the attention of historians of early Islamic history.[3] Equally problematic has been the identity of Sayf's redactors, since al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rīkh* was the sole source for most of Sayf's extant accounts. Qasim al-Samarrai's recent publication of a critical edition of two substantial fragments of Sayf's *Kitāb al-ridda wa-l-futūḥ* and *Kitāb al-jamal wa-masīr ʿĀ'isha wa-ʿAlī* [The Book of the Battle of the Camel and the Journey of ʿĀ'isha and ʿAlī] has provided a new opportunity to investigate the problem of Sayf's redactors.[4]

Based on a marginal note of one Abū Bakr ibn Sayf found in *Kitāb al-jamal*, Samarrai suggested an identity for this commentator and further proposed that he is responsible for the version of Sayf that was transmitted in both Ibn ʿAsākir and the published fragments. While the central role of Abū Bakr ibn Sayf in the transmission of these texts is apparent, Samarrai's identification of Ibn Sayf and his assumptions about the provenance of these manuscripts based on that identification cannot be correct. A fuller examination of Sayf's accounts in Ibn ʿAsākir offers proof for a convincing

[3] For a review of scholarship on Sayf's sources, see Ella Landau Tasseron, "Sayf ibn ʿUmar in Medieval and Modern Scholarship," *Der Islam* 67 (1990), 1–26, and Fred M. Donner, "Sayf ibn ʿUmar," 102b.

[4] Sayf ibn ʿUmar al-Tamīmī, *Kitāb al-ridda wa-l-futūḥ wa-Kitāb al-jamal wa-masīr ʿĀ'isha wa-ʿAlī*, ed. with introduction by Qasim al-Samarrai (Leiden: Smitskamp Oriental Antiquarium, 1995).

identification of this Abū Bakr ibn Sayf and provides a more probable explanation for his involvement in transmitting Sayf's *Kitāb al-ridda wa-l-futūḥ*.

Table 1 presents the two *isnāds* that precede Sayf accounts in al-Ṭabarī and Ibn ʿAsākir. Although al-Ṭabarī also utilized another recension of Sayf, that of ʿUbayd Allāh ibn Saʿīd al-Zuhrī (d. 260/874),[5] only the Sarī/Shuʿayb chain is found in Ibn ʿAsākir. The "top" of *isnād* 1a—Sayf ← Shuʿayb ibn Ibrāhīm ← al-Sarī ibn Yaḥyā ← Abū Bakr ibn Sayf ← Abū Ṭāhir al-Mukhalliṣ ← Ibn al-Nuqūr ← Abū l-Qāsim ibn al-Samarqandī ← Ibn ʿAsākir—is consistently attached to Sayf's accounts in Ibn ʿAsākir. *Isnād* 1b—Sayf ← Shuʿayb ibn Ibrāhīm ← al-Sarī ibn Yaḥyā ← al-Ṭabarī—is the familiar chain of transmission found with most Sayf accounts in al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh*. Thus, Ibn ʿAsākir did not use al-Ṭabarī to access Sayf's accounts, but used instead the version of Sayf transmitted through Abū Bakr ibn Sayf and Abū Ṭāhir al-Mukhalliṣ. However, both Ibn ʿAsākir's and al-Ṭabarī's versions of Sayf share an intermediary in the form of the transmitters Shuʿayb and Sarī, which suggests that the transmissions of both works might be similar, if not the same. Unfortunately, despite their prominence in the transmission of Sayf's work, virtually nothing is known about Shuʿayb or Sarī other than their names and the *nisbas* that have been attached to them (usually al-Tamīmī, sometimes al-Kūfī). We do not know their death dates, nor are they attested in *isnāds* other than those of Sayf.[6]

Yet while the chain of transmission of Sayf in Tabarī's *Taʾrīkh* is poorly documented, we are on much firmer ground with the chain of transmission in Ibn ʿAsākir. After Abū Bakr ibn Sayf, the remainder of *isnād* 1a—Abū Ṭāhir al-Mukhalliṣ ← Ibn al-Nuqūr ← Abū l-Qāsim ibn al-Samarqandī ← Ibn ʿAsākir—is well attested and is attached to a number of accounts in *TMD*. Abū Ṭāhir al-Mukhalliṣ (d. 393/1003) is known in the biographical literature as a transmitter of both *ḥadīth* and *akhbār*, and appears unanimously to be considered trustworthy (*thiqa*).[7] To cite one example among

[5]Jawād ʿAlī, "Mawārid taʾrīkh al-Ṭabarī," *Majallat al-Majmaʿ al-ʿilmī al-ʿirāqī* 3 (1954), 51; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, IV, 295–96; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Al-Muntaẓam fī taʾrīkh al-umam wa-l-mulūk*, 18 vols., ed. Muḥammad ʿAṭāʾ and Muṣṭafā ʿAṭāʾ (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmīya, 1992), XII, 161; Ibn al-Nadīm, *Al-Fihrist*, ed. R. al-Māzandarānī (Tehran: Maṭbaʿat Dānishgāh, 1971), 107; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, 14 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khanjī, 1931), X, 323–24.

[6]Al-Dhahabī, Ibn Ḥajar and Ibn al-Nadīm include short notices for Shuʿayb. See al-Dhahabī, *Mīzān al-iʿtidāl*, II, 275; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Lisān al-mīzān*, 6 vols. (Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-maʿārif al-niẓāmīya, 1911–13), III, 176; Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 106.

[7]Abū Ṭāhir Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn al-ʿAbbās al-Baghdādī: al-Dhahabī,

many, in Ibn ʿAsākir's extensive biography of Khālid ibn al-Walīd, Abū Ṭāhir is noted not only as a transmitter of Sayf's *Kitāb al-ridda*, but also of Ibn Isḥāq's *Sīra* [Biography of the Prophet] via Yūnus ibn Bukayr (d. 199/815), al-Zubayr ibn Bakkār's (d. 256/870) *Kitāb nasab Quraysh wa-akhbārihim* [The Book of Genealogy and Historical Reports of Quraysh], and his uncle Muṣʿab ibn ʿAbd Allāh's (d. 236/851) *Kitāb nasab Quraysh* [The Book of the Genealogy of Quraysh].[8] He also transmitted *tafsīr* (Qurʾān commentary) and Prophetic *ḥadīth* in Ibn ʿAsākir,[9] and he studied with some of the most eminent *muḥaddiths* of his time. As for the final two links in the *isnād*, Ibn al-Nuqūr (d. 470/1078)[10] is also found frequently in Ibn ʿAsākir's *isnāds*, and Abū l-Qāsim ibn al-Samarqandī (d. 536/1142)[11] was one of Ibn ʿAsākir's teachers and hence a direct authority. Their identities and relationships to each other are all confirmed in the biographical literature, and there is no apparent reason to suspect that their identities have been conflated, altered, or confused, as sometimes happens in works that are heavily documented with *isnāds*.

To further add to its credibility, this *isnād* from Sayf to Abū Ṭāhir al-Mukhalliṣ appears in two other sources. The first, *isnād* 1c, is from a single citation in al-Sahmī's (d. 427/1038) *Taʾrīkh Jurjān* [History of Jurjān]. Al-Sahmī mentioned in the *isnād* that he heard this account from Abū Ṭāhir al-Mukhalliṣ at Baghdad.[12] The second, *isnād* 1d, is a list of transmitters of Sayf's *Kitāb al-ridda* found in Ibn Khayr al-Ishbīlī's (d. 575/1179) *Fahrasa* [Catalogue]. According to this *isnād*, Abū Dharr al-Harawī heard Sayf's

Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ, 25 vols., ed. S. al-Arnaʾūṭ *et al.* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-risāla, 1981–85), XVI, 478–81; *idem*, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām wa-wafayāt al-mashāhīr wa-l-aʿlām*, ed. ʿU. Tadmurī (Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-ʿarabī, 1987–proceeding), XXVII, 292–95; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab*, 8 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qudsī, 1931–32; repr. Beirut: Dār iḥyāʾ al-turāth al-ʿarabī, n.d.), III, 144; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, XV, 41; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, II, 322–23; Sezgin, *GAS*, I, 214.

[8]*TMD*, XVI, 216–81.

[9]*Ibid.*, I, 397; II, 30.

[10]Abū l-Ḥusayn [or alternatively al-Ḥasan] Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Bazzāz: Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī l-taʾrīkh*, 13 vols., ed. C.J. Tornberg (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1863), X, 107–108; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, III, 335–36; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, XVI, 193.

[11]Abū l-Qāsim Ismāʿīl ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿUmar ibn Abī l-Ashʿath: *TMD*, VIII, 357–59; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, XI, 90; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, IV, 112; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, XVIII, 20–22.

[12]Al-Sahmī, *Taʾrīkh Jurjān aw kitāb maʿrifat ʿulamāʾ ahl Jurjān*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh al-Yamānī (Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-maʿārif al-ʿuthmānīya, 1950), 4.

work from Abū Ṭāhir al-Mukhalliṣ himself (*samā'an 'alayhi*).[13] Abū Dharr traveled and studied extensively in the east, and Abū Ṭāhir al-Mukhalliṣ was mentioned as one of his authorities.[14] The identities of the transmitters and their relationships to each other in the remainder of the *isnād* are confirmed in the biographical literature.[15] This last reference is especially important in that it indicates that Abū Bakr ibn Sayf was a redactor of Sayf's *Kitāb al-ridda wa-l-futūḥ* in its entirety (i.e. not just fragments), and that his recension of Sayf's *Kitāb al-ridda wa-l-futūḥ* was widely circulated in the western Islamic world.

The identity of Abū Bakr ibn Sayf becomes essential, then, to placing our *isnāds* on more solid ground. Apparently, none of the editors of *TMD* has ever proposed an identity for this Abū Bakr ibn Sayf in their critical apparatus. Sukayna al-Shihābī, an editor of several volumes of Ibn 'Asākir, noted in her paper on Ibn 'Asākir's sources that Abū Bakr ibn Sayf was Aḥmad ibn 'Abd Allāh, but she did not attempt to identify him further.[16] In his recent translation of a volume of al-Ṭabarī, G.H.A. Juynboll noted a citation of Abū Bakr ibn Sayf in the Leiden manuscript of Ibn Ḥubaysh's *Kitāb al-ghazawāt* [Book of Conquests], which he was collating with al-Ṭabarī to establish a more accurate reading of Sayf. Juynboll suggests that this Ibn Sayf might be the son of Sayf ibn 'Umar himself.[17]

Samarrai rejects the "son of Sayf" theory in his introduction to his edition of *Kitāb al-ridda/Kitāb al-jamal*, and proposes that this Abū Bakr ibn Sayf

[13] Ibn Khayr al-Ishbīlī, *Fahrasat mā rawāhu 'an shuyūkhihi min al-dawāwīn al-muṣannafa fī ḍurūb al-'ilm wa-anwā' al-ma'ārif*, ed. F. Codera and J. Ribera Tarrago (Saragossa, 1894–95), 237.

[14] Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, XIV, 440; Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ ibn Mūsā, *Tartīb al-madārik wa-taqrīb al-masālik li-ma'rifat a'lām madhhab Mālik*, 8 vols., ed. S. A'rāb (Rabat: al-Mamlakat al-'arabīya, Wizārat al-awqāf wa-l-shu'ūn al-islāmīya, 1982), VIII, 229–31.

[15] See Table 1, *isnād* 1d. Al-Shaykh al-Ṣāliḥ Abū Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh ibn Sa'īd ibn Labāj al-Shantajlī (d. 436/1045): Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-buldān*, 6 vols., ed. F. Wüstenfeld (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus for the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, 1924), III, 326–27; Abū Muḥammad, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Attāb (d. 520/1126): Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, IV, 61.

[16] Sukayna al-Shihābī, "Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq: maṣdar lam yudras wa-ahammīyatuhu fī ta'rīkh ṣadr al-Islām," in M.A. Bakhīt, ed., *Proceedings of the Second Symposium on the History of Bilād al-Shām During the Early Islamic Period up to 40 A.H./640 A.D* (Amman: University of Jordan, 1987), III, 368–69.

[17] Al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, XIII: *The Conquest of Iraq, Southwestern Persia, and Egypt*, trans. G.H.A. Juynboll (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 20.

was the son of Abū Bakr 'Abd Allāh ibn Mālik ibn Sayf al-Tujībī al-Miṣrī (d. 307/980), who was, as his *nisba* al-Miṣrī indicates, an Egyptian.[18] Samarrai's assumptions rest on the fact that this Egyptian Abū Bakr ibn Sayf was a contemporary of al-Ṭabarī and an eminent Qur'ān reciter (*qāri'*) in Egypt. Accordingly, he assumes an Egyptian provenance for this recension of Sayf.[19] However, there seems to be no record of this Ibn Sayf's son "Aḥmad" in the biographical literature, and it is unclear why Samarrai finds him to be a probable identification.

A closer look at Ibn 'Asākir's *isnāds* reveals that Samarrai's identification of Ibn Sayf cannot be correct. In a practice common to works such as *TMD*, the mysterious Ibn Sayf of our *isnāds* is, in fact, listed variously as Aḥmad ibn 'Abd Allāh,[20] Aḥmad ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Sa'īd ibn Sayf,[21] and in combinations with his *kunya* Abū Bakr, or his *nisba* al-Sijistānī.[22] With this additional information, it can be shown that this Abū Bakr ibn Sayf was a Shāfi'ī *muḥaddith* who was well known in the biographical literature.

Ṭabaqāt and Biographical Evidence

Table 2 summarizes the extant "biographical" information for Abū Bakr ibn Sayf—variations on his name, death date, and his activities as a *muḥaddith* and an adherent of the Shāfi'ī school (*madhhab*) of Islamic law. The earliest references to Ibn Sayf are found in al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's *Ta'rīkh Baghdād* [History of Baghdad].[23] The notices of Ibn Qāni' (d. 351/962),[24] Ibn Shādhān

[18] Abū Bakr 'Abd Allāh ibn Mālik ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Yūsuf ibn Sayf al-Tujībī al-Miṣrī: al-Dhahabī, *Ma'rifat al-qurrā' al-kibār 'alā l-ṭabaqāt wa-l-a'ṣār*, 2 vols., ed. M.S. 'Abbād al-Ḥaqq (Cairo: Dār al-kutub al-ḥadītha, 1969), I, 188; *idem*, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, XIV, 440; Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyat al-nihāya fī ṭabaqāt al-qurrā'*, 2 vols., ed. G. Bergstrasser (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khanjī, 1932), I, 445; *idem*, *Al-Nashr fī qirā'āt al-'ashr*, 2 vols., ed. M. Dahmān (Damascus: Maṭba'at al-tawfīq, 1935), I, 114; Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, II, 251.

[19] Samarrai's introduction to Sayf ibn 'Umar's *Kitāb al-ridda/Kitāb al-jamal*, I, 12.

[20] *TMD*, II, 142.

[21] *Ibid.*, I, 318; II, 111; XXIX, 264.

[22] *Ibid.*, II, 127.

[23] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rīkh Baghdād*, IV, 225–26.

[24] Abū l-Ḥusayn 'Abd al-Bāqī ibn Qāni' ibn Marzūq: al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 4 vols. (Hyderabad: Dā'irat al-ma'ārif al-'uthmānīya, 1955–56), III, 883–84; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rīkh Baghdād*, XI, 88–89; Sezgin, *GAS*, I, 188–89, Akram Ḍiyā' al-'Umarī, *Mawārid al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī fī Ta'rīkh Baghdād* (Damascus: Dār al-qalam, 1975), 406–407. Ibn Qāni''s *Wafayāt* was a frequent source for death dates in al-Khaṭīb's *Ta'rīkh Baghdād*.

(d. 383/993),[25] and Ibn al-Jundī (d. 396/1005)[26] contain Ibn Sayf's lineage, as well as two possible death dates (315 or 316/927 or 928). Another very early reference to Ibn Sayf is found in the *Fihrist* [Catalogue] of Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 385/995).[27] An honorific *al-fāriḍ* ["elderly", i.e. blessed by advanced years] and his association with al-Rabīʿ ibn Sulaymān (d. 270/883), the famous disciple of al-Shāfiʿī, are noted. There is an unfortunate lacuna in the text where Ibn Sayf's own biography was supposed to be. This evidently contained his lineage and a list of works that were attributed to him—a list that is not replicated in any of his other biographies.[28]

The first notice of Ibn Sayf in a Shāfiʿī biographical work is in the *Taʿlīqa* of Abū Ṭayyib al-Ṭabarī (d. 450/1058).[29] Abū Ṭayyib reports his death date to be 318/930, and is the first to link Ibn Sayf with al-Shāfiʿī's famous disciple al-Muzanī (d. 264/878).[30] Subsequent notices in al-ʿAbbādī (d. 458/1066),[31] al-Subkī (d. 771/1369),[32] and Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba (d. 851/1412)[33] cite this *ḥadīth* and several others, and also link him to another famous Shāfiʿī disciple, Yūnus ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā (d. 264/877).[34] Unfortunately, nothing in these notices in the Shāfiʿī biographical literature offers any clue as to why Abū

[25]Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Shādhān: al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, IV, 18–20; al-ʿUmarī, *Mawārid al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī*, 371; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, XVI, 193.

[26]Abū l-Ḥasan Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿImrān: Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, III, 147; al-ʿUmarī, *Mawārid al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī*, 166–67. Although Ibn al-Jundī is considered weak in the transmission of *ḥadīth*, he is cited by al-Khaṭīb frequently for the death dates of early ʿAbbāsid *rijāl*.

[27]Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 88, 264.

[28]*Ibid.*, 267.

[29]Abū l-Ṭayyib Ṭāhir ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Ṭāhir ibn ʿUmar al-Ṭabarī: E. Chaumont, art. "al-Ṭabarī, Abū l-Ṭayyib" in *EI*², X, 15b–16a; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, III, 284; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, XVI, 39; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, IX, 355.

[30]Abū Ibrāhīm Ismāʿīl ibn Yaḥyā al-Muzanī: W. Heffening, art. "al-Muzanī" in *EI*², VII, 822a–b.

[31]Al-ʿAbbādī, *Kitāb ṭabaqāt al-fuqahāʾ al-shāfiʿīya*, ed. G. Vitestam (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1964), 60.

[32]Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿīya al-kubrā*, 11 vols., ed. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Hilw and Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Tanājī (Cairo: Ḥajar li-l-ṭibāʿa wa-l-nashr, 1992), II, 184.

[33]Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿīya*, 4 vols., ed. ʿA. Khān (Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-maʿārif al-ʿuthmānīya, 1978–80), I, 89.

[34]Abū Mūsā, Yūnus ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā al-Ṣadafī: al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, II, 527–28.

Bakr ibn Sayf would have been involved in transmitting Sayf, whose reputation as a *muḥaddith* was surely less than sterling.

There is, however, one clue in the biographical literature that might link Ibn Sayf to *akhbār* rather than *ḥadīth*. In his biographical entry for Ibn Sayf, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī listed three authorities with whom he studied (*samiʿa ʿan*): al-Muzanī and Yūnus ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā, as well as the famous traditionist ʿUmar ibn Shabba al-Numayrī (d. 264/877).[35] Although well regarded for his transmission of *ḥadīth*, Ibn Shabba is also known for transmitting *akhbār*. Al-Ṭabarī, for example, cites ʿUmar ibn Shabba's own works frequently as well as his transmission of al-Madāʾinī (d. 225/839). Unfortunately, this does not provide the "smoking gun" needed to establish Ibn Sayf as a redactor of Sayf ibn ʿUmar; in fact, Petersen has suggested that Ibn Shabba's accounts were used by al-Ṭabarī as a counter-narrative to Sayf's *Kitāb al-ridda*.[36] The Khaṭīb himself noted that he could not find any *ḥadīth* transmitted by Ibn Shabba to Ibn Sayf.[37] Perhaps this was because Ibn Shabba was one of Ibn Sayf's authorities for *akhbār*, rather than *ḥadīth*. Finally, it is in the Khaṭīb's biography of Ibn Sayf that he is established as an authority of Abū Ṭāhir al-Mukhalliṣ.

Considered with the *isnād* materials in Ibn ʿAsākir discussed above, the evidence seems compelling to identify the Shāfiʿī traditionist Ibn Sayf with the Ibn Sayf who was a transmitter of Sayf ibn ʿUmar. Not only was he a redactor of Sayf, but the presence of three marginal notes attached to Sayf's accounts indicate that he also offered philological notes for difficult portions of Sayf's text. Two are found in Ibn Ḥubaysh's *Kitāb al-ghazawāt* and are translations of Persian dialogue.[38] The other in Sayf's *Kitāb al-jamal* is an

[35]Abū Zayd ʿUmar ibn Shabba ibn ʿAbda ibn Rāʾiṭa al-Numayrī al-Baṣrī: Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, VII, 460; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, I, 208–10; Sezgin, *GAS*, I, 345.

[36]E. Petersen, *ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya in Early Arabic Tradition* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1964), 150–51.

[37]Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, IV, 226.

[38]The first note (in Sayf's account of the battle of al-Qādisīya) is found in the margin of the Madrid Ms. of Ibn Ḥubaysh: *Ghazawāt Ibn Ḥubaysh*, 2 vols. ed. Suhayl Zakkār (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1992), II, 164; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. M.J. de Goeje *et al.* (Leiden, 1879–1901), I, 2290: *qāla Abū Bakr al-ṣawāb markadan yaʿnī mā ʿarjuluhu*. The second note (in Sayf's account of the conquest of al-Madāʾin) is found in the margin of the Leiden Ms.: *Ghazawāt Ibn Ḥubaysh*, II, 252; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 2441: *qāla Abū Bakr ibn Sayf yaʿnī qad jāʾa al-Shayṭān*. Presumably, the Abū Bakr of the first note is also Ibn Sayf, as both citations are Persian philological notes.

explanation of a line of poetry from Jarīr's (d. 111/729) *Dīwān*.[39] We cannot be sure if there were other marginal notes by Ibn Sayf that were dropped over the centuries, but his presence in these notes suggests that Ibn Ḥubaysh used his recension of *Kitāb al-ridda* in addition to al-Ṭabarī's recounting of Sayf. Ibn Ḥubaysh's student Ibn Diḥya (d. 633/1235)[40] corroborated this in his *khuṭba* to *Kitāb al-ghazawāt* when he mentioned both Sayf's *Kitāb al-ridda wa-l-futūḥ* and al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rīkh* as Ibn Ḥubaysh's sources.[41] Presumably the *Kitāb al-ridda/Kitāb al-jamal* fragments are also Ibn Sayf's redaction, but we do not have a chain of manuscript transmission between Sayf and either the earliest known redactor of the fragments or Ibn Ḥubaysh to assert this unequivocally.[42]

Textual Evidence

Having firmly established the identity of Abū Bakr ibn Sayf and his pivotal role in the transmission of Sayf in at least three known versions of Sayf—the *Kitāb al-ridda/Kitāb al-jamal* fragments, Ibn 'Asākir, and portions of Ibn Ḥubaysh—it is now more profitable to compare the Sarī/Shu'ayb accounts of Ibn 'Asākir with the Sarī/Shu'ayb accounts of al-Ṭabarī. The textual correspondence between the two Sarī/Shu'ayb versions indicates that Ibn 'Asākir (via Ibn Sayf) and al-Ṭabarī used the same recension of Sayf.[43]

Table 3 compares several of Sayf's accounts found in al-Ṭabarī with other Abū Bakr ibn Sayf recensions of Sayf. In the first example, Ḥafṣa bint 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb was sent by prominent Companions to determine how much of the booty from the battle of al-Qādisīya 'Umar intended to keep for himself.[44] The *isnāds* in al-Ṭabarī and Ibn 'Asākir are identical, and there are only

[39]Sayf ibn 'Umar, *Kitāb al-ridda/Kitāb al-jamal*, II, 348: *qāla Abū Bakr ibn Sayf tahubbu balīlā ya'nī rīḥan bāridatan*, from Jarīr ibn 'Aṭīya's (d. 111/729) lament for al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwām after the Battle of the Camel.

[40]Abū l-Khaṭṭāb 'Umar ibn Ḥasan ibn 'Alī al-Sabtī: al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, IV, 1420–23.

[41]Ibn Ḥubaysh, *Ghazawāt*, I, 9.

[42]According to Samarrai, the oldest reading note is at the bottom of f. 14a, that of Sa'd ibn Abī l-Ghayth, the governor of Yanbu' (d. 801/1400). Samarrai noted that Abū Ghayth was attested in al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Taghrībirdī: Samarrai's introduction to Sayf ibn 'Umar's *Kitāb al-ridda/Kitāb al-jamal*, I, 7–8.

[43]The recent publication of both Ibn Ḥubaysh's *Kitāb al-ghazawāt* and the *Kitāb al-ridda/Kitāb al-jamal* fragments provide further means to compare al-Ṭabarī with the Ibn 'Asākir/Ibn Sayf recension, and also support the conclusion that Ibn 'Asākir and al-Ṭabarī were working with the same recension.

[44]*TMD*, XXXIX; 410–11; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2416–17.

minor textual variations that might result from a scribal error or an orthographic transposition. Both accounts appear to be quoted in their entirety. In a similar vein is the account of 'Uthmān's murder and the ransacking of his home and the public treasury. This account is also found in the *Kitāb al-ridda/Kitāb al-jamal* fragments, and as with the Ḥafṣa accounts, the *akhbār* are virtually identical.[45]

The next example concerns 'Umar's dismissal of Khālid ibn al-Walīd while he was stationed at Qinnasrīn. A series of *akhbār* describe Khālid's use of a wine and saffron mixture in a bathhouse in Qinnasrīn, Khālid and Iyāḍ ibn Ghanm's conquest of the Jazīra and their distribution of booty, Khālid's "trial" before Abū 'Ubayda, Khālid's return to Medina to complain to 'Umar, and 'Umar's vindication of Khālid.[46] The *isnāds*, the text, and the order of the *akhbār* are identical. Missing is a bit of poetry attributed to Khālid in one *khabar*, and another *khabar* concerning Abū 'Ubayda's reluctance to tell Khālid of his dismissal.[47]

Poetry was one of the first things to go in al-Ṭabarī's use of Sayf. The poems of one of Sayf's favorite Tamīmī heroes, al-Qa'qā' ibn 'Amr, are routinely suppressed by al-Ṭabarī. Al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Ḥubaysh have identical accounts of the battle of Nihāwand, but Ibn Ḥubaysh includes al-Qa'qā''s poems at the end.[48] In the battles of al-Yarmūk and Fiḥl, Ibn Ḥubaysh follows al-Ṭabarī's version of Sayf and drops al-Qa'qā''s poems, but Ibn 'Asākir retains them.[49] The presence of these poems (or their omission) further confirms that Ibn Ḥubaysh sometimes followed al-Ṭabarī in his use of Sayf, but apparently also used Sayf's *Kitāb al-ridda*. It also suggests that al-Ṭabarī, Ibn 'Asākir, and Ibn Ḥubaysh were all using the same recension of Sayf—the Sarī/Shu'ayb recension—and that any variations were the work of al-Ṭabarī.

Identical accounts concerning the Companion Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Yamān (d. 36/656) are found in the *Kitāb al-ridda/Kitāb al-jamal* fragments and Ibn 'Asākir. Ḥudhayfa explained to Sa'īd ibn al-'Āṣ that in his campaigning he had heard people complaining about 'Uthmān's codification of the Qur'ān and his suppression of local recensions. At the beginning of the *khabar* it is

[45]*TMD*, VI, 415–16; Sayf ibn 'Umar, *Kitāb al-ridda/Kitāb al-jamal*, II, 197–98; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, II, 3019–22.

[46]*TMD*, XVI, 264–65; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2525–28.

[47]*TMD*, XVI, 265–66.

[48]Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2856; Ibn Ḥubaysh, *Ghazawāt*, II, 325–51.

[49]*TMD*, I, 487–88, 551–52; Ibn Ḥubaysh, *Ghazawāt*, I, 219, 302; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2188, 2105.

explained that Ḥudhayfa and Sa'īd ibn al-'Āṣ met in Ādharbayjān to reinforce the Muslims, after which they returned to al-Kūfa together. The clear point of the account is to enumerate one of the complaints against the caliph 'Uthmān; the locationary information on the circumstance that brought them together is secondary.[50] In al-Ṭabarī, the locationary sentence is given verbatim, but the complaints about the codification of the Qur'ān are suppressed entirely.[51] Al-Ṭabarī's use of this account seems to be to reconcile it with his order and chronology of the campaigns: Sa'īd and Ḥudhayfa had been campaigning together previously in Ṭabaristān, had separated and rejoined in Ādharbayjān, and were next found together in al-Kūfa, where Sa'īd had been appointed governor.[52]

Previous examples have shown that al-Ṭabarī sometimes abbreviated the Sarī/Shu'ayb text and provided a different context for the account. A final case demonstrates that in some instances, al-Ṭabarī took a Sarī/Shu'ayb narrative and interpolated the text itself into another *khabar* with a different *isnād*, and suppressed personal and place names that he found problematic. The *Kitāb al-ridda/Kitāb al-jamal* fragments, Ibn 'Asākir, and al-Ṭabarī are all identical at the beginning of the account. After 'Uthmān was besieged by rebels at Medina, he sent a letter to the garrison towns (*amṣār*) relating his plight and asking for assistance. Sa'd ibn Abī l-Waqqāṣ determined that he could not help the caliph and left Medina with his two sons Muḥammad and 'Abd Allāh. Ḥassān ibn Thābit followed soon after, heading toward Mecca.[53] Al-Ṭabarī drops the account here, and it is completed in the other two sources. The letter reached the *amṣār*, and Sayf enumerates a number of Syrian Companions and Successors who were supportive of 'Uthmān: the Companions Ḥabīb ibn Maslama, Yazīd ibn Shaj'a, 'Ubāda ibn al-Ṣāmit, Abū l-Dardā', Abū Umāma, and 'Amr ibn 'Abasa, and the Successors Sharīk ibn Khubāsha, Abū Muslim al-Khawlānī, and 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ghanm. The identity of the Companions Yazīd ibn Shaj'a and 'Amr ibn 'Abasa mystified later *muḥaddiths*, and their presence in the biographical literature seems to be based on a few obscure references to them.

[50] *TMD*, VI, 234–35; Sayf ibn 'Umar, *Kitāb al-ridda/Kitāb al-jamal*, II, 48; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2596–2634.

[51] Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2856.

[52] *Ibid.*, I, 2836 (in an account transmitted by al-Madā'inī), 2893 (in an account transmitted by Sayf).

[53] *TMD*, VI, 381–82; Sayf ibn 'Umar, *Kitāb al-ridda/Kitāb al-jamal*, II, 201; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 3250.

Al-Ṭabarī resolved the problem by weaving this list of names into another narrative and dropping the mystery Companions. Giving the text of some other letter of 'Uthmān, al-Ṭabarī relates that Mu'āwiya dispatched Ḥabīb ibn Maslama by camel to attend tribal councils and urge support for 'Uthmān. Al-Ṭabarī also enumerated supporters from al-Kūfa, al-Baṣra, and Egypt. His list for Syria remains the same, minus the mystery Companions Yazīd and 'Amr. Al-Ṭabarī preceeded this account with "Sayf and his shaykhs", perhaps so that he would not invite comparisons with other versions of Sayf.[54]

These few examples are corroborated by Samarrai's thorough collation of the *Kitāb al-ridda/Kitāb al-jamal* fragments with al-Ṭabarī. He has concluded that while there is certainly correspondence between the two versions of Sayf, al-Ṭabarī often changed or eliminated *isnāds* and portions of narratives, as well as combined unrelated narratives into a new account.[55] More work with Ibn 'Asākir's Sayfian accounts should corroborate these findings, although Ibn 'Asākir's use of Sayf does not provide a basis for understanding the ordering of Sayf's accounts, as the fragments do.

Conclusion

Establishing the identity of Abū Bakr ibn Sayf through *isnād* analysis provides some important clues as to how Sayf's works were transmitted. We can be certain that his recension of Sayf was widely known and utilized in both the eastern and western Islamic worlds. It does not seem possible to link Sarī and Shu'ayb to either Abū Bakr ibn Sayf or his contemporary al-Ṭabarī. The evidence suggests that Sarī/Shu'ayb, complete with *nisbas* linking them to Sayf's tribe of Tamīm, are the cover for an anonymous redactor between Sayf himself and al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Sayf.[56] This complete chain of transmission, whose unknown transmitters did not run the risk of being exposed in the *isnād*-conscious age of al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Sayf, gave the anonymous redactor freedom to compile or even create a version of Sayf that suited his purposes. This redactor might also have been responsible for some of Sayf's sources that seem to defy identification.

[54] Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2959–60.

[55] Samarrai's introduction to Sayf ibn 'Umar's *Kitāb al-ridda/Kitāb al-jamal*, I, 14–18.

[56] Scholars have long suspected the existence of an anonymous redactor between Sayf and al-Ṭabarī. See Juynboll's introduction to *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, XIII: *The Conquest of Iraq, Southwestern Persia, and Egypt*, xiii; Jawād 'Alī, "Mawārid ta'rīkh al-Ṭabarī," III, 50.

A textual comparison of Sayf's accounts in Ibn 'Asākir with al-Ṭabarī, the *Kitāb al-ridda/Kitāb al-jamal* fragments, and other author/compilers who rely on Sayf, such as Ibn Ḥubaysh, indicate that they all used the Sarī/Shu'ayb version of Sayf. Al-Ṭabarī and Ibn 'Asākir's versions of Sayf are virtually identical in many instances. In places where they differ, careful collation of al-Ṭabarī's variant accounts with other Sarī/Shu'ayb accounts reveal that these differences were the work of al-Ṭabarī, and those accounts will not serve as a useful control in establishing Sayf at first—the earliest, or perhaps even the original *Kitāb al-ridda wa-l-futūḥ* that was first circulated in the early Arabic tradition.

Table 1. – Sarī/Shu'ayb recensions of Sayf

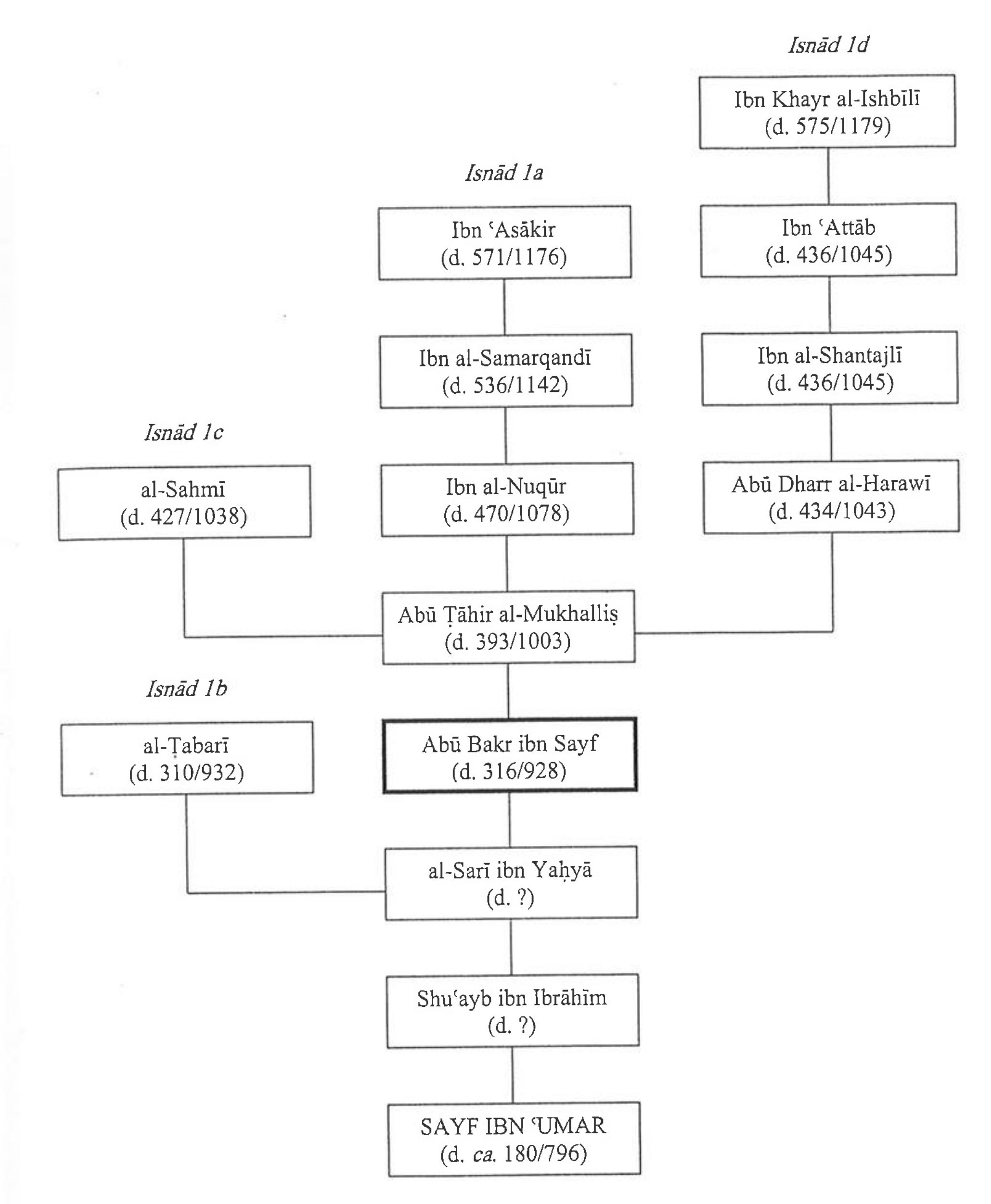


Table 2. – Abū Bakr ibn Sayf in the *Ṭabaqāt* Literature

Ibn Qāniʿ (d. 351/962), *Wafayāt* via al-Khaṭīb
- He died in 316.

Ibn Shādhān (d. 383/993) cited by al-Khaṭīb
- Name: Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Ṣayf ibn Saʿīd al-Sijistānī
- He died 18 Jumādā I, 316.
- He was the deputy (*khalīfa*) of Abū ʿUmar al-Qāḍī (d. 320/932).

Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 385/995), *al-Fihrist*
- Name: Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Sayf ibn Saʿīd al-Sijistānī al-Fāriḍ
- He transmitted traditions on the authority of al-Rabīʿ ibn Sulaymān.
- *Ibn Sayf... al-Fāriḍ... wa-ismuhu... wa-lahu min al-kutub...*

Ibn al-Jundī (d. 396/1005) cited by al-Khaṭīb
- Name: Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Sayf ibn Saʿīd al-Sijistānī
- He died in 315.

Abū l-Ṭayyib al-Ṭabarī (d. 450/1058), *Taʿlīqa* via al-Asnawī
- He died in 318.
- *Rajaz* poem of Abū l-Dardāʾ proposing marriage.

al-ʿAbbādī (d. 458/1066), *Kitāb ṭabaqāt al-fuqahāʾ*
- Name: Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Sayf al-Sijistānī
- Tradition: The *shahāda* of a man in a *ḥammām* is not obligatory.
- *Rajaz* poem of Abū l-Dardāʾ proposing marriage.
- He heard traditions from al-Muzanī.

al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071), *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*
- Name: Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn [Yūsuf] ibn Sayf al-Fāriḍ
- He heard traditions from al-Muzanī, Yūnus ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā, and ʿUmar ibn Shabba al-Numayrī
- Daʿlaj ibn Aḥmad, Abū l-Qāsim ibn al-Naḥḥās al-Muqriʾ, Abū Ḥafṣ ibn Shāhīn, and Abū Ṭāhir al-Mukhalliṣ heard traditions from him.
- Prophetic *ḥadīth* on ritual ablution.

al-Samʿānī (d. 562/1176), *Kitāb al-ansāb*
- Name: Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Sayf ibn Saʿīd al-Fāriḍ
- Same as *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*

al-Subkī (d. 771/1369), *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿīya al-kubrā*
- Name: Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Sayf al-Sijistānī
- He heard traditions from al-Muzanī and Yūnus ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā.
- Tradition: The *shahāda* of a man in a *ḥammām* is not obligatory.
- *Rajaz* poem of Abū l-Dardāʾ proposing marriage.
- Tradition: al-Shāfiʿī overheard two men talking and rebuked them.

Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba (d. 851/1412), *Ṭabāqāt al-shāfiʿīya*
- Name: Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Sayf al-Sijistānī
- *Rajaz* poem of Abū l-Dardāʾ proposing marriage, with *isnād:* al-Rāfiʿī in the 4th chapter of his *al-Ṣadāq* – al-Qaffāl al-Shāshī – Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Sayf – al-Muzanī.

Table 3. – Comparison of Abū Bakr ibn Sayf recensions of Sayf with al-Ṭabarī

Topic	Sayf Fragments	al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/932)	Ibn ʿAsākir (d. 571/1176)	Ibn Ḥubaysh (d. 584/1188)
Ḥafṣa bint ʿUmar – booty from al-Qādisīya		*Taʾrīkh*, I, 2416-17	*TMD*, XLIV, 270 (ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb)	
Murder of ʿUthmān	*Kitāb al-ridda/Kitāb al-jamal*, II, 197-98	*Taʾrīkh*, I, 3019-20	*TMD*, XXXIX, 410-11 (ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān)	
Dismissal of Khālid ibn al-Walīd		Missing: • Khalid's *qiṭʿa* in a letter to ʿUmar • Abū ʿUbayda's reluctance to tell Khālid and Khālid's *qiṭʿa* in response *Taʾrīkh*, I, 2525-28	*TMD*, XVI, 265-68 (Khālid ibn al-Walīd)	
al-Qaʿqāʿ ibn ʿAmr's poems: Conquest of Nihāwand		Missing: • poems of al-Qaʿqāʿ *Taʾrīkh*, I, 2634		*Ghazawāt*, II, 349-51
al-Qaʿqāʿ ibn ʿAmr's poems: Battles of al-Yarmūk and Fiḥl		Missing: • poems of al-Qaʿqāʿ al-Yarmūk: *Taʾrīkh*, I, 2105 Fiḥl: *Taʾrīkh*, I, 2158	*TMD*, II, 107-08 *TMD*, II, 166	al-Yarmūk: *Ghazawāt*, I, 302 Fiḥl: *Ghazawāt*, I, 219
Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Yamān and Saʿīd ibn al-ʿĀṣ – codification of the Qurʾān	*Kitāb al-ridda/Kitāb al-jamal*, II, 48-51	Missing: • Codification of the Qurʾān *Taʾrīkh*, I, 2856	*TMD*, XXXIX, 241-43 (ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān)	
ʿUthmān's letter to the *amṣār* – his supporters in Syria	*Kitāb al-ridda/Kitāb al-jamal*, II, 201	Changes: • New context • No *isnād* • Dubious Companions Yazīd ibn Shajʿa and ʿAmr ibn ʿAbasa dropped *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3250	*TMD*, XXXIX, 370 (ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān)	

[shaded box] = identical traditions

5

Ibn ʻAsākir's Sources for the Late Umayyad Period

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BECAUSE OF ITS FOCUS on Damascus and the volume of information it contains, Ibn ʻAsākir's *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq* has the potential to be an extraordinarily important source for the study of Umayyad history. However, before scholars of Umayyad history rush to extract material from this potential treasure trove, it is essential to understand more about the sources Ibn ʻAsākir utilized in his work and the methods he used to present materials he derived from these sources. It is also important to determine how reliably Ibn ʻAsākir preserved material from his sources. While such an exercise may be somewhat tedious at times, only after making such an inquiry can we fairly assess the value of Ibn ʻAsākir's *TMD* as a source for Umayyad history.

Unfortunately, a complete analysis of the sources Ibn ʻAsākir used is unfeasible for a number of reasons. First, the sheer number of biographies the *TMD* contains and the quantity of citations in each biography present formidable obstacles to such an effort. Second, as will be illustrated more fully below, many of Ibn ʻAsākir's sources are otherwise lost or unknown to us. Hence, it is impossible to verify Ibn ʻAsākir's citations of these sources or to determine with any certainty whether he reproduced them faithfully. This article therefore makes no claim to be a definitive study of each and every source Ibn ʻAsākir used for the Umayyad period. Instead, this will be a rather limited inquiry into the nature and reliability of Ibn ʻAsākir's sources. By examining a number of carefully chosen biographies of Umayyad figures, this article will analyze the sources Ibn ʻAsākir relied upon most

heavily, illustrating how he manipulated these sources to fit the structure of his biographies, and determining how reliably he reproduced the information his sources provided.

Parameters of the Study

The first task in a study such as this is to narrow the field of inquiry to a manageable size. We begin by establishing temporal and geographical limits. Each of the individuals discussed below was a significant figure during the late Umayyad period and died after the year 100/718. Each was also a resident of Damascus or its immediate vicinity. None of the many travelers and visitors to Damascus whom Ibn ʻAsākir discussed in his work have been included. To limit the study further, a small sample of individuals from this period has been selected. This is by no means a random sample, since a sample generated by random sampling techniques would include biographies of obscure individuals who may not appear in other sources. In order to compare Ibn Asākir's approach to that of other historians and biographers, it is essential that the figures examined be sufficiently prominent to be mentioned in a variety of sources. Therefore, this examination focuses on relatively well-known figures who appear in a variety of earlier biographical sources. The individuals discussed also represent several general categories of people. This will allow differences in Ibn ʻAsākir's treatment of people of varying social status to be evaluated. The figures discussed below can be classified under the two broad categories of scholars and caliphs. While the division between "men of the pen" and "men of the sword" may not have been clearly delineated in the late Umayyad period, the distinction is useful for this study, particularly since the biographies examined do reveal significant differences, both material and structural, between Ibn ʻAsākir's treatment of scholars and rulers.

With these criteria in mind, this study will examine Ibn ʻAsākir's biographies of eight individuals: four scholars and four caliphs. The first scholar included is ʻAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʻAmr al-Awzāʻī (d. *ca.* 157/773), the well-known Syrian legal thinker with whom Joseph Schacht associated the ancient Syrian legal *madhhab* [school]. Al-Awzāʻī was an influential legal scholar in both the late Umayyad and early ʻAbbāsid periods, and apparently advised both Umayyad and ʻAbbāsid caliphs on legal and doctrinal matters. Most of the biographical sources include notices on al-Awzāʻī, but these notices are generally brief and offer few details. The exceptions are Abū Nuʻaym's *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'* [Attributes of the Holy Ones], which includes a lengthier biography

of approximately fifteen pages, and Ibn Abī Ḥātim's *Taqdimat* [Introduction], which contains a 35-page collection of al-Awzāʿī 's letters. While these reports contain extensive information about al-Awzāʿī, Ibn ʿAsākir's biography of al-Awzāʿī is over 80 pages in length and is the most complete extant source on this important scholar.[1]

The second scholar included is Makḥūl al-Shāmī, another well-known Syrian jurist who died around 113/731. Makḥūl was a more controversial figure than was his student al-Awzāʿī. He was one of the leading *muḥaddiths* [transmitters of Prophetic traditions] of his day and taught *ḥadīth* [Prophetic tradition] to many prominent scholars, as well as a number of political figures. In addition to al-Awzāʿī, his students included al-Zuhrī (d. *ca.* 124/742) and the future caliph Yazīd ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (d. 105/724). Despite his reputation as a *muḥaddith*, Makḥūl was accused of being a Qadarī on several occasions, perhaps because he also counted Thawr ibn Yazīd and other Qadarī leaders among his students. Makḥūl is discussed in most major biographical works, including al-Bukhārī's *Kitāb al-taʾrīkh al-kabīr* [Great Book of Historical Chronology], Ibn Saʿd's *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt* [Book of Generations] and Ibn Abī Ḥātim's *Kitāb al-jarḥ wa-l-taʿdīl* [Book of Invalidation and Verification]. Abū Nuʿaym included a longer biography of approximately sixteen pages in his *Ḥilya*, but Ibn ʿAsākir's biography of Makḥūl, which exceeds 38 pages, is the largest extant collection of material about him.[2]

[1] Joseph Schacht, *Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950), 70–73; *idem*, *Introduction to Islamic Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 40–43; *TMD*, XXXV, 147–229; Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, 9 vols. (Beirut: Dār ṣādir, 1957), VII, 488; Khalīfa ibn Khayyāṭ, *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt*, ed. Akram Ḍiyāʾ al-ʿUmarī, 2 vols. (Baghdad: Maktabat al-ʿĀnī, 1967), 315–16; al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-taʾrīkh al-kabīr*, 4 vols. (Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-maʿārif al-ʿuthmānīya, 1941), III.1, 326; Abū Zurʿa, *Taʾrīkh Abī Zurʿa al-Dimashqī*, ed. Shukr Allāh ibn Niʿmat Allāh al-Qūjānī, 2 vols. (Damascus: Majmaʿ al-lugha al-ʿarabīya bi-Dimashq, 1981), see index; Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *Taqdimat al-maʿrifa li-kitāb al-jarḥ wa-l-taʿdīl* (Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-maʿārif al-ʿuthmānīya, 1952), 184–219; *idem*, *Kitāb al-jarḥ wa-l-taʿdīl*, 9 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-ʿulūm, 1973), V, 266–67; Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ wa-ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyāʾ*, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-ʿarabī, 1967), VI, 135–47. Regarding al-Awzāʿī's role as an advisor to the Umayyads, see Steven Judd, "The Third Fitna: Orthodoxy, Heresy, and Coercion in Late Umayyad History" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1997), 153–56.

[2] *TMD*, LX, 196–235; Ibn Saʿd, VII, 454; Khalīfa, *Ṭabaqāt*, 310; al-Bukhārī, *Al-Taʾrīkh al-kabīr*, IV.2, 21–22; Abū Zurʿa, see index; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Jarḥ*, VIII, 407–408; Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, V, 177–93; Josef van Ess, *Anfänge muslimischer Theologie* (Beirut: Beirut Texte und Studien, 1977), 217–20; *idem*, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra*, 6 vols. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991–95), I, 83–102.

Thawr ibn Yazīd, the third scholar included, was less esteemed than Makḥūl. Thawr was accepted by many as a *muḥaddith*, but was also widely accused of being a Qadarī. Al-Awzāʿī, a staunch opponent of the Qadarīs, reportedly wrote a lengthy refutation of Thawr's doctrinal positions after encountering him on a journey. Other reports indicate that, because of his Qadarī beliefs, an angry mob drove Thawr from his home in Ḥimṣ and razed his house. Despite these incidents, Thawr survived the anti-Qadarī backlash after Yazid III's death and remained an active scholar until his own death in 153/770, during the early ʿAbbāsid period. He is included in this study because his Qadarī views placed him somewhat outside the mainstream, but did not entirely destroy his reputation as a *muḥaddith*. A number of sources contain brief biographies of Thawr, including Ibn Saʿd, al-Bukhārī, and Abū Nuʿaym. Ibn ʿAsākir devotes less attention to Thawr than to al-Awzāʿī and Makḥūl, but his fourteen-page biography of Thawr is more extensive than other sources.[3]

The final religious scholar included is ʿAmr ibn Muhājir (d. 139/756), who was an important theologian during the reign of ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 101/720), when he also served as the commander of ʿUmar's police force. He is included here because he was both a scholar and a bureaucrat. A number of biographical sources, including Ibn Saʿd and al-Bukhārī, mention him, but biographies of ʿAmr ibn Muhājir are generally rather short. His biography in Ibn ʿAsākir is only seven pages long.[4] This group represents a fairly broad spectrum of religious scholars from the late Umayyad period. Each of these scholars was well-known and included in an assortment of biographical and *ṭabaqāt* works. This small sample includes highly respected *muḥaddiths*, suspected heretics, and bureaucrats spanning the period under consideration. It also includes scholars who held a variety of views on the Qadarī controversy, the central doctrinal debate of late Umayyad history. While this sample is not random and may not satisfy social science criteria for representativeness, it does include a somewhat diverse collection of relatively well-known figures.

Fewer options are available for choosing caliphs to include in this study. Ideally, the study would simply examine the last four Umayyad caliphs. However, lacunae in Ibn ʿAsākir's work prevent this. There is no biography of Yazīd III (d. 126/744) in either *TMD* or in Ibn Manẓūr's *Mukhtaṣar*. Hishām

[3] *TMD*, XI, 183–97; Ibn Saʿd, VII, 467; Khalīfa, *Ṭabaqāt*, 315; al-Bukhārī, *Al-Taʾrīkh al-kabīr*, I.2, 180–81; Abū Zurʿa, see index; Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, VI, 93–100.

[4] *TMD*, XLVI, 399–406; Ibn Saʿd, VII, 462; Khalīfa, *Ṭabaqāt*, 313; al-Bukhārī, *Al-Taʾrīkh al-kabīr*, III.2, 373; Abū Zurʿa, see index; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Jarḥ*, VI, 261.

ibn 'Abd al-Malik (d. 125/743) appears only in the *Mukhtaṣar*. Unfortunately, Ibn Manẓūr omitted most of Ibn 'Asākir's *isnāds* [chains of transmission], making his version of Hishām's biography virtually useless for the type of study undertaken here.[5] To cope with the problem created by these lacunae, this study will examine the biographies of the last four Umayyad caliphs who appear in *TMD*. Specifically, this study will include Ibn 'Asākir's treatment of Yazīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik (d. 105/724), whose biography covers thirteen pages;[6] al-Walīd ibn Yazīd (d. 126/743), whose biography is twenty;[7] Ibrāhīm ibn al-Walīd (d. 127/744), whose biography is six pages;[8] and Marwān ibn Muḥammad (d. 132/750), whose biography is 29 pages.[9]

Analysis of Ibn 'Asākir's Sources

The following discussion of Ibn 'Asākir's sources for these eight figures will focus primarily on his use of several well-known earlier sources for Umayyad history. This more narrow focus will facilitate a discussion of the accuracy of Ibn 'Asākir's citation of these sources and will further limit the scope of the study. A thorough study of each of Ibn 'Asākir's sources, known and unknown, is too substantial a task for the present article and, indeed, perhaps an impossible task. For example, Ibn 'Asākir's biography of al-Awzā'ī alone contains over 225 *isnāds*, many of which are five or six generations deep.[10] While some of these *isnāds* recur and a number overlap, many contain otherwise unknown figures and many citations are rather cryptic, making it difficult at times even to be certain of the identity of his sources. While this study will focus primarily on a few well-known sources, several comments about unknown sources will be included as well.

A systematic examination of Ibn 'Asākir's sources for his biographies of the eight figures described above reveals that his *TMD* does include some material derived from sources that are apparently otherwise lost. However, this exercise also reveals that Ibn 'Asākir derived a substantial portion of his information from a few well-known sources. Ibn 'Asākir relied most frequently

[5]Ibn Manẓūr, *Mukhtaṣar ta'rīkh dimashq li-Ibn 'Asākir*, ed. Rūḥīyat al-Khās and Muḥammad Muṭī' al-Ḥāfiẓ, 29 vols. (Damascus: Dār al-fikr, 1984–91), XXVII, 97–105. See Appendix C for a listing of major lacunae in Ibn 'Asākir's *TMD*.

[6]*TMD*, LXV, 300–13.

[7]*Ibid.*, LXIII, 319–39.

[8]*Ibid.*, VII, 246–52.

[9]*Ibid.*, LVII, 319–47.

[10]*Ibid.*, XXXV, 147–229.

on the earlier Damascene historian Abū Zur'a (d. 281/894). However, he did not rely exclusively on Syrian sources. He also cited a variety of Iraqi and Medinan sources quite frequently. While he received much of his Iraqi and Medinan material through Syrian intermediaries, the following examination demonstrates that these sources were not significantly altered in the process of transmission.

Abū Zur'a al-Dimashqī

Abū Zur'a 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Amr ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Dimashqī is the most frequently cited source in the biographies examined in this study. He is cited 50 times in these eight biographical entries and appears in each biography examined, except that of Ibrāhīm. However, this omission may merely reflect the fact that Abū Zur'a himself did not include information on the short-reigned Ibrāhīm in his *Ta'rīkh* [History].[11]

The vast majority of Ibn 'Asākir's references to Abū Zur'a are derived from his *Ta'rīkh*, and in most instances he has quoted Abū Zur'a's *Ta'rīkh* verbatim. There is also strong evidence that Ibn 'Asākir utilized a second, otherwise unknown, work by Abū Zur'a. One of Ibn 'Asākir's reports names Abū Zur'a's *Tasmiyat al-aṣāghir min aṣḥāb Wāthila ibn al-Asqa'* [The Enumeration of the Younger Companions of Wāthila ibn al-Asqa'] as its source. Four other reports appear under the same *isnād* as the *Tasmiya* report. None of these reports refers to this second work by name. The contents of these five reports do not appear in Abū Zur'a's *Ta'rīkh* either. It seems reasonable to conclude that Ibn 'Asākir utilized a second distinct work by Abū Zur'a, the otherwise unknown *Tasmiya*. This work is not mentioned in other sources. Sezgin attributes only two works to Abū Zur'a: his *Ta'rīkh* and an unpublished collection of *ḥadīth* entitled *Al-Aḥādīth wa-l-ḥikāyāt wa-l-'ilal wa-l-su'ālāt* [*Ḥadīth* Reports and Accounts and (Their) Deficiencies and Questions]. In his short biography of Abū Zur'a, Ibn 'Asākir did not mention the *Tasmiya*, but he did not specifically name any of Abū Zur'a's other works either.[12]

[11]Abū Zur'a, see index. Regarding the composition of Abū Zur'a's work, see Gernot Rotter, "Abū Zur'a ad-Dimašqī (st. 281/894) und das Problem der frühen arabischen Geschichtsschreibung in Syrien," *Die Welt des Orients* 6 (1971), 80–104. Rotter concludes that while Abū Zur'a relied on a variety of mostly Iraqi sources for the life of the Prophet, he relied more heavily on Syrian sources for the Umayyad period.

[12]Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, 11 vols. to date (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967–proceeding), I, 302; *TMD*, XXXV, 141–45.

An examination of the *isnāds* attached to these reports reveals that Ibn 'Asākir received his information from Abū Zur'a via a small set of transmitters. The *isnāds* of the vast majority of these reports (46 of 50) begin with Abū Muḥammad ibn al-Akfānī (d. 523/1129), one of Ibn 'Asākir's principal teachers, and Abū Muḥammad al-Kattānī (d. 466/1074).[13] Al-Kattānī apparently wrote extensively, but the reports examined here do not refer specifically to written material received from him, via Ibn al-Akfānī or other avenues. Nor does Ibn 'Asākir's biography of al-Kattānī catalogue his works.[14]

Ibn 'Asākir's *Isnāds* for Abū Zur'a's Works	
Ta'rīkh (41 occurrences)	*Tasmiya* (5 occurrences)
Abū Muḥammad Hibat Allāh ibn al-Akfānī	Abū Muḥammad ibn al-Akfānī
Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Aḥmad al-Kattānī al-Azmī al-Ṣūfī	Abū Muḥammad al-Kattānī
'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Uthmān Abū Muḥammad ibn Abī Naṣr al-Shahīd al-Ṭamīmī al-'Adl	Abū l-Qāsim Tammām ibn Muḥammad al-Bajalī
Abū l-Maymūn al-Bajalī ibn Rāshid	Ja'far ibn Muḥammad Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Kindī
Abū Zur'a	Abū Zur'a

There is some indication that Ibn 'Asākir relied on written sources he received from Ibn al-Akfānī, and it is possible that some of Ibn 'Asākir's information for the Umayyad period was derived from the *Ta'rīkh al-Shām*

[13]James E. Lindsay, "Damascene Scholars during the Fāṭimid Period: an Examination of 'Alī Ibn 'Asākir's *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq*," *Al-Masāq* 7 (1994), 40–41.

[14]*TMD*, XXXVI, 262–65; trans. in Lindsay, "Damascene Scholars," 46–50; regarding al-Kattānī's works, see *ibid.*, 45.

[History of Syria] attributed to Ibn al-Akfānī in other sources. However, Ibn 'Asākir does not cite specific works by Ibn al-Akfānī in the biographies examined in this study.[15] Of the 46 Ibn al-Akfānī *isnāds*, 41 can be traced to Abū l-Maymūn ibn Rāshid's (d. 346/958) recension of Abū Zur'a's *Ta'rīkh*.[16] The other five Ibn al-Akfānī *isnāds* connect to the *Tasmiya*. Hence, Ibn 'Asākir gained access to these frequently cited works primarily through his teacher, Ibn al-Akfānī. Variations of the 46 Ibn al-Akfānī *isnāds* are shown in the chart below. As the chart illustrates, each of the *isnāds* begins with Ibn al-Akfānī and al-Kattānī, though Ibn 'Asākir does not refer to them in a consistent manner. For instance, sometimes al-Kattānī is referred to as "al-Ṣūfī" or as "al-'Azmī". Throughout his work, Ibn 'Asākir used a variety of abbreviated references to the same individuals in his *isnāds*, making it difficult at times to determine exactly to whom he refers. Despite minor variations in citations, the first two links in both the *Ta'rīkh* and *Tasmiya isnāds* are clearly Ibn al-Akfānī and al-Kattānī. At the third link, the *isnāds* diverge. The next link in the *Ta'rīkh isnād* is Abū Muḥammad ibn Abī Naṣr al-Tamīmī (d. 420/1029), who resided in Damascus and was one of al-Kattānī's shaykhs.[17] In one citation, he is mistakenly identified as 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Uthmān Abū l-Qāsim (rather than 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Uthmān ibn al-Qāsim). The same citation exhibits other peculiarities suggesting scribal errors. It identifies Ibn al-Akfānī as "al-Mazakī", an honorific not attached to him in other sources, and identifies Abū Zur'a by his full name, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Amr ibn Ṣafwān, rather than the more commonly used *kunya*.[18] The next link in the *Tasmiya isnād* is Abū Qāsim Tammām al-Bajalī (d. 414/1023), a native of Damascus to whom al-Kattānī referred as his shaykh and teacher.[19] The immediate link to Abū Zur'a in the *Ta'rīkh isnād* is 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Abd Allāh Abū l-Maymūn al-Bajalī (d. *ca.* 346/958), whose recension of Abū Zur'a's *Ta'rīkh* is the basis for the current published edition of his work. Abū l-Maymūn is also the avenue through which other works of Abū

[15]In his biography of Abū Zur'a, Ibn 'Asākir indicated that his material was derived from a written text of Ibn al-Akfānī. It is possible that this material was derived from his *Dhayl dhayl ta'rīkh*. See Lindsay, "Damascene Scholars," 44–45. It is also possible that this material came from the *Ta'rīkh al-Shām* attributed to him by al-Salafī; see Ibn Kathīr al-Dimashqī, *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahā' al-shāfi'īn*, 3 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-thaqāfa al-dīnīya, 1993), II, 582.

[16]Only one of these reports indicates that Ibn 'Asākir relied on a written source, however.

[17]*TMD*, XXXV, 103; XXXVI, 262.

[18]*Ibid.*, XXXV, 186.

[19]*Ibid.*, XXXVI, 262; XI, 43–45.

Zur'a (though not the *Tasmiya*) were transmitted.[20] He resided in Damascus and taught *ḥadīth* to both Tammām ibn Muḥammad al-Bajalī and 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Naṣr. The immediate link to Abū Zur'a in the *Tasmiya isnād* is Ja'far ibn Muḥammad Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Kindī (d. 347/959), who apparently resided in Damascus, despite Kūfan origins, and was a teacher to both Tammām and 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Naṣr.[21]

The *isnāds* of Ibn 'Asākir's Abū Zur'a reports indicate that a relatively small community of scholars was responsible for preserving Abū Zur'a's work. These scholars were residents of Damascus and apparently had frequent interactions with each other. Given the fact that Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Kindī and Abū l-Maymūn were contemporaries and shared both students and teachers, it is somewhat surprising that the lines of transmission for the *Ta'rīkh* and *Tasmiya* remained distinct. This suggests that the two works were distinct and that, for whatever reason, Abū Zur'a did not teach the same material to these two students. These *isnāds* also illustrate that there was a distinctly Syrian historical tradition built upon Abū Zur'a's work. If, as Rotter has argued, Abū Zur'a relied more heavily on Syrian sources for the Umayyad period, Ibn 'Asākir's heavy reliance on Abū Zur'a may suggest that Ibn 'Asākir not only tried to preserve the history of Syria, but to rely on Syrian sources whenever possible.[22]

Khalīfa ibn Khayyāṭ

Ibn 'Asākir also relied on a variety of non-Syrian sources. The Baṣran traditionist Khalīfa ibn Khayyāṭ (d. 241/855) is cited more than twenty times and appears as a source in each of the eight biographies examined. Material from both his *Ta'rīkh* [History] and his *Ṭabaqāt* [Book of Generations] is included in Ibn 'Asākir's work. The *Ṭabaqāt* is cited five times and appears in each of the biographies of religious scholars. The *Ṭabaqāt* does not appear in the biographies of caliphs, probably for the simple reason that Khalīfa did not discuss caliphs in his *Ṭabaqāt*. Material from the *Ṭabaqāt* is always quoted accurately, and in the biographies of 'Amr ibn Muhājir and Makḥūl, the *Ṭabaqāt* numbers are even included in the citations.[23] Four of the five citations appear under the same *isnād*, while Ibn 'Asākir received the fifth

[20] *Ibid.*, XXXV, 57–59; Rotter, 86.

[21] *TMD*, XI, 43; XXXV, 101; Ibn Manẓūr, VI, 79.

[22] Rotter, 99–100.

[23] Khalīfa ibn Khayyāṭ, *Ta'rīkh Khalīfa ibn Khayyāṭ*, ed. Akram Ḍiyā' al-'Umarī (al-Najaf: Maṭba'at al-adab, 1967), see index; *idem*, *Ṭabaqāt*, 310, 313.

report from al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, who will be discussed more fully below. The *isnād* of the *Ṭabaqāt* reports is somewhat complicated, since Ibn 'Asākir received the same information from two sources, each of whom also received it from more than one source:

> Abū l-Barakāt ibn al-Mubārak al-Anamāṭī and Abū l-'Izz Thābit ibn Manṣūr al-Kaylī ← Abū Ṭāhir al-Bāqillānī Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad and Abū l-Faḍl ibn Khayrūn Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥasan ← Abū l-Ḥusayn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad al-Iṣbahānī ← Abū l-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq al-Ahwāzī ← Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar ibn Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq al-Ahwāzī.

The immediate informants of Ibn 'Asākir were Abū l-Barakāt al-Anamāṭī (d. 538/1144) and Thābit ibn Manṣūr Abū l-'Izz al-Kaylī (d. 529/1134). Abū l-Barakāt was a frequent source for Ibn 'Asākir and is reported to have written a number of books, including works entitled *Al-Ta'rīkh* and *Ṭabaqāt al-aṣḥāb al-mukhtaṣar* among others.[24] Thābit was a Ḥanbalī *muḥaddith* from Iraq to whom a number of books were attributed.[25] The remaining figures in this *isnād* are somewhat obscure and Ibn 'Asākir did not include them in his *TMD*. Their exclusion is not unexpected, since none of them were Syrians. The third link in the *isnād*, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad al-Iṣbahānī (d. 428/1037) is mentioned by the Khaṭīb, who adds that he was also known as al-Ahwāzī and reported *ḥadīth* from Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq, the next link in the *Ṭabaqāt isnād*.[26] Unfortunately, the Khaṭīb offers no further information about Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad. Al-Mizzī mentions a *muḥaddith* named Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq ibn 'Īsā al-Ahwāzī (d. 250/864), who could be the father of Muḥammad and 'Umar from the *Ṭabaqāt isnād*. However, he does not mention either of them.[27] The prominence of Ahwāzīs in the *isnād* suggests that Khalīfa's work became known in Syria rather late and that Ibn 'Asākir or one of his teachers may have encountered the work while traveling in the east.[28]

[24] Ibn al-'Imād al-Ḥanbalī, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 8 vols. (Beirut: al-Maktab al-tijārī li-l-ṭibā'a wa-l-nashr wa-l-tawzī', 1966), IV, 116–17.

[25] Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, IV, 93.

[26] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rīkh Baghdād*, 14 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1931), II, 218–19.

[27] Al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl fī asmā' al-rijāl*, ed. Bashshār 'Awwād Ma'rūf, 35 vols. (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-risāla, 1980–92), I, 265.

[28] Regarding al-Ahwāz, see Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-buldān*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld, 6 vols. (Leipzig: Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, 1866–73), I, 410–14.

Each of the fourteen references that can be traced to Khalīfa's *Ta'rīkh* has an identical *isnād*, beginning with Abū Ghālib Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī (d. *ca.* 500/1107), who appears frequently as one of Ibn 'Asākir's informants.[29] The other links in the *Ta'rīkh isnād* are obscure figures who are not included in the *TMD*, again suggesting that Ibn 'Asākir may have obtained this material outside Syria. None of these individuals appears in the *Ṭabaqāt isnād*, implying that Ibn 'Asākir learned material from the two works on separate occasions during his travels. Material from Khalīfa's *Ta'rīkh* appears in each biography examined except that of Makḥūl, but the work is never cited by name.

AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ

Ibn 'Asākir also cited al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071) quite frequently. The Khaṭīb is cited 25 times in the biographies examined here. Information attributed to the Khaṭīb appears in each biography except those of 'Amr ibn Muhājir and Thawr ibn Yazīd. While the Khaṭīb was not a Syrian, he spent considerable time in Damascus and exerted great influence on the scholarship of later generations in Damascus. Ibn 'Asākir's biography of the Khaṭīb indicates that he spent at least three years in Damascus and includes a long list of Syrian scholars who studied with him during his residence there.[30] His *Ta'rīkh Baghdād* [History of Baghdad] is considered to be a model for later biographical works, including Ibn 'Asakir's *TMD*.[31] It is not at all surprising, then, that the Khaṭīb was an important source for Ibn 'Asākir. The fact that he is cited so frequently in biographies of Umayyad figures illustrates that the Khaṭīb's scholarly interest extended beyond Baghdād and that he actively studied Umayyad figures during his lengthy stays in Damascus. None of the material attributed to the Khaṭīb in these eight biographies appears in his *Ta'rīkh Baghdād*, since these figures fall outside the boundaries of that particular work. None were long term residents of Iraq and, in fact, six of the eight figures studied died before Baghdād was even built. It is quite possible that the corpus of the Khaṭīb's scholarly production included works on Umayyad history. However, in the citations examined in this study, no

[29] Ibn al-'Imād, *Shdharāt al-dhahab*, III, 412. It is uncertain whether the Abū Ghālib described by Ibn al-'Imād is the same Abū Ghālib Ibn 'Asākir relied on as a source. However, I have been unable to find any more likely candidate.

[30] *TMD*, V, 32, 40.

[31] Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: a Framework for Inquiry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 132.

specific works are named. Nor does Ibn 'Asākir's biography of the Khaṭīb mention any works other than his *Ta'rīkh Baghdād*.[32]

Ibn 'Asākir obtained reports on the Khaṭīb's authority via an assortment of intermediaries. Since only a single generation separated the two historians, the *isnāds* of these reports are quite short. In most cases, only a single intermediary is named. Ibn 'Asākir received ten of the 25 Khaṭīb reports from his teacher Abū Muḥammad ibn al-Akfānī, who counted the Khaṭīb among his shaykhs.[33] Ibn 'Asākir also received two written reports from Abū Muḥammad ibn Ḥamza. The remaining thirteen reports were obtained from eight other people, some of whom appear in other *isnāds*, but most of whom are unknown. It is not surprising that so many individuals transmitted on the Khaṭīb's authority, since he spent significant periods of time in Damascus and, as a prestigious teacher, would have attracted numerous students from among Ibn 'Asākir's shaykhs.

IBN SA'D

In these biographies, Ibn 'Asākir cited Ibn Sa'd (d. 230/784) twelve times. Reports attributed to him appear in each of the eight biographies except that of Ibrāhīm. Most of this material is derived from Ibn Sa'd's *Ṭabaqāt*. However, Ibn 'Asākir had at least two, perhaps three versions of this important work. Ibn 'Asākir relied most frequently on Ibn Abī l-Dunyā's (d. 281/894) recension of the *Ṭabaqāt*, citing it five times with the same *isnād*. He also cited the recension by Ibn Sa'd's student al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Fahm (d. 289/902) four times and that of al-Ḥārith ibn Abī Usāma (d. 282/895) twice. The *isnāds* of these two recensions converge with Abū 'Umar ibn Hayyawayh (d. 381/991), whose version of the *Ṭabaqāt* was used in the Leiden edition.[34] No transmitters from the Ibn Abī l-Dunyā *isnād* appear in the other versions.

While Ibn 'Asākir may have simply used Ibn Hayyawayh's recension rather than distinct versions from al-Ḥārith and Ḥusayn, there is material reported under both *isnāds* that does not appear in the Leiden edition.[35] This suggests either that Ibn 'Asākir's material came from two separate versions rather than from Ibn Hayyawayh's compilation or that portions of Ibn Hayyawayh's recension have been lost. Ibn 'Asākir often cited multiple ver-

[32] *TMD*, V, 31–41.

[33] Ibn Kathīr, *Ṭabaqāt*, II, 582.

[34] Regarding various recensions of Ibn Sa'd, see J. Fück, art. "Ibn Sa'd" in *EI* [2], III, 922b.

[35] *TMD*, LVII, 319–22; LX, 136–38; LXIII, 327.

sions of Ibn Sa'd's reports in the same biographical entry. In those instances where he cited more than one version, the Ibn Abī l-Dunyā version always appears first, followed by the other version (usually Ḥusayn ibn al-Fahm's recension). It is unclear whether this placement of different versions represents any judgment on their relative merits or veracity. The unusual consistency in the order of citations of the alternate readings merits additional investigation, however. The differences between the content of the recensions are minimal. The most significant variation is in the assignment of *ṭabaqāt* numbers. For example, Ḥasan ibn al-Fahm's version ranks Thawr ibn Yazīd in the fifth *ṭabaqāt* while Ibn Abī l-Dunyā's places him in the fourth. Similarly, 'Amr ibn al-Muhājir appears in Ibn Abī l-Dunyā's third *ṭabaqāt* rather than the fourth.[36] Ibn 'Asākir clearly had at least two versions of portions of Ibn Sa'd. Rather than choosing between them, he faithfully reproduced both.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī

Ibn 'Asākir also cited Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 327/939) a number of times and included material from both his *Al-Jarḥ wa-l-ta'dīl* and his *Taqdima*. Ibn Abī Ḥātim is cited only in biographies of scholars, and there is no reference to him in Ibn 'Asākir's biography of Thawr, since Ibn Abī Ḥātim himself did not mention Thawr.[37] While Ibn 'Asākir does not specifically mention the work, material from the *Jarḥ wa-l-ta'dīl* appears verbatim in most cases. The *isnāds* of the *Jarḥ wa-l-ta'dīl* citations are identical, each beginning with Abū l-Ḥusayn Hibat Allāh al-Qāḍī (d. 563/1168), Ibn 'Asākir's older brother and one of his first teachers. This suggests that Ibn Abī Ḥātim's work may have been one of the first biographical works Ibn 'Asākir learned. Despite the fact that Hibat Allāh also studied Ibn Sa'd's *Ṭabaqāt*, he did not apparently transmit this work to his brother Ibn 'Asākir.[38] Ibn 'Asākir also received the *Jarḥ wa-l-ta'dīl* reports from a second informant, Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Abd al-Malik al-Adīb (d. 532/1138),[39] who was a *muḥaddith* from Iṣbahān who appears frequently as one of Ibn 'Asākir's informants. Both he and Hibat Allāh presented Ibn Abī Ḥātim reports under the same *isnād*, beginning with 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Minda, who is listed as one of Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Adīb's teachers. The *isnād* suggests that Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Adīb and Hibat Allāh may have learned Ibn Abī Ḥātim's works in the same setting.

[36] *Ibid.*, XLVI, 402; XI, 185–86; Ibn Sa'd, VII, 462, 467.

[37] Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Jarḥ*, V, 266–67; VI, 261; VIII, 407–408.

[38] Ibn Kathīr, *Ṭabaqāt*, II, 673–74.

[39] Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, ed. Shu'ayb Arna'ūṭ, 25 vols. (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-risāla, 1981–88), XIX, 620–21.

A variety of material from the *Taqdima* is included in these biographies as well, but it is seldom attributed directly to Ibn Abī Ḥātim. Ibn 'Asākir's biography of al-Awzā'ī includes several anecdotes that also appear in the *Taqdima*. These include reports emphasizing al-Awzā'ī's piety, descriptions of his steadfastness in the face of demands from the 'Abbāsid governor of Ḥimṣ, and accounts of his generosity toward the Christians in Beirut. Accounts of these incidents in Ibn 'Asākir's *TMD* and Ibn Abī Ḥātim's *Taqdima* are remarkably similar in both wording and detail.[40] However, in only one instance did Ibn 'Asākir cite Ibn Abī Ḥātim as his source for material that also appears in the *Taqdima*. Instead, these reports appear under an assortment of *isnāds* that have little in common. This suggests that the stories about al-Awzā'ī that Ibn Abī Ḥātim preserved circulated widely in Damascus and that his *Taqdima* was merely one of many sources recording al-Awzā'ī's deeds. This is not at all surprising when al-Awzā'ī's importance as a Syrian legal figure and theologian is considered.[41] The number of sources to which Ibn 'Asākir ascribes reports of al-Awzā'ī's excellence may suggest that his influence in Syria extended longer than is often assumed.[42]

Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī

Material from Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī's (d. 403/1013) *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'* also appears in each of the biographies of scholars, but not in those of caliphs. Abū Nu'aym is cited specifically eleven times in these biographies. All of the material attributed to him can be found in his *Ḥilya*. Ibn 'Asākir received most of his Abū Nu'aym reports from Abū 'Alī al-Ḥaddād's book, which is given no title. Abū 'Alī al-Ḥaddād is presumably al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Iṣbahānī (d. 515/1122), who allegedly reported a great deal of information from Abū Nu'aym. Despite his 96–year lifespan, he could not have received reports directly from Abū Nu'aym. Biographical information

[40] Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Taqdima*, 209–12, 218; *TMD*, XXXV, 193–94, 196, 198–99, 214–15, 221.

[41] Regarding al-Awzā'ī's influence in Umayyad Syria, see Judd, "The Third Fitna," 153–56.

[42] This suggests that Gerhard Conrad may have underestimated the lifespan of al-Awzā'ī's *madhhab* in Syria. However, extensive research would be required to determine if widespread legends about al-Awzā'ī imply continuing influence on law and theology in Syria. See his *Die Quḍāt Dimašq und der madhab al-Auzā'ī. Materialien zur syrischen Rechtsgeschichte* (Beirut: In Kommission bei Franz Steiner Verlag Stuttgart, 1994).

on Abū 'Alī is somewhat sparse, and there is no mention of the untitled book Ibn 'Asākir attributed to him in the available sources.[43] Abū 'Alī's son, 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Abī 'Alī al-Ḥaddād (d. 517/1123) reportedly wrote a book of *ḥadīth*, known either as *Al-Jāmi'a bayn al-Ṣaḥiḥayn* [The Unity of the Two *Ṣaḥīḥs*] or as *Iẓrāf al-Ṣaḥiḥayn* [The Eloquence of the Two *Ṣaḥīḥs*].[44] It is, however, unlikely that this is the book from which Ibn 'Asākir gleaned historical information about Umayyad figures. Moreover, 'Ubayd Allāh does not appear in Ibn 'Asākir's *isnād*, suggesting that he was not the avenue through which his father's works were transmitted. Hence, the exact nature of the frequently cited book of Abū 'Alī al-Ḥaddād remains obscure.

Some material found in Abū Nu'aym's *Ḥilya* is also reported in Ibn 'Asākir, but without attribution to Abū Nu'aym. In particular, a lengthy account of al-Awzā'ī's exchange with al-Manṣūr is included in both sources. The accounts are remarkably similar. In fact, large portions of the two accounts are identical. However, the *isnāds* of these reports diverge quite early, indicating that both Ibn 'Asākir and Abū Nu'aym relied on earlier sources and suggesting that Ibn 'Asākir was unaware of Abū Nuāym's report, portions of which are not included in other versions.[45] It is possible, of course, that Ibn 'Asākir simply chose not to include a citation to Abū Nu'aym, deferring to Syrian sources instead, particularly since he quoted other portions of Abū Nu'aym's entry on al-Awzā'ī. However, we cannot be certain that Ibn 'Asākir's version of Abū Nu'aym's *Ḥilya* was complete.

AL-BUKHĀRĪ

Ibn 'Asākir cites al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) six times. Reports attributed to al-Bukhārī appear in each of the biographies of scholars, but do not appear in the biographies of caliphs. This is not unusual, since al-Bukhārī did not include biographies of caliphs in his work. Ibn 'Asākir's citations of al-Bukhārī can each be traced to his *Al-Ta'rīkh al-kabīr* and appear under two principal *isnāds*. The first, which appears three times, is rather complex. Ibn 'Asākir's immediate sources were Abū l-Ghanā'īm Muḥammad ibn 'Alī (d. 510/1117) and Abū l-Faḍl ibn Nāṣir, both of whom appear frequently in Ibn 'Asākir's *isnāds*. Abū l-Ghanā'īm was a Kūfan *muḥaddith* and Ibn Nāṣir

[43]Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi'īya al-kubrā*, ed. 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Hilw and Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Tanājī, 11 vols. (Cairo: Ḥajar li-l-ṭibā'a wa-l-nashr, 1992), VII, 35; Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, IV, 47.

[44]Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, IV, 56; Sezgin, I, 142.

[45]*TMD*, XXXV, 213–18; Abū Nu'aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, VI, 136–40.

was one of his students.[46] Abū l-Ghanā'īm and Ibn Nāṣir relied on at least three, perhaps four, sources who also relied on multiple sources. The second *isnād*, appearing twice, begins with Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Khaṭīb (not to be confused with Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī). In each of his citations of al-Bukhārī, Ibn 'Asākir reproduced the material from al-Bukhārī's *Ta'rīkh* verbatim.[47]

AL-ṬABARĪ

Perhaps the most intriguing finding of this examination is the virtual absence of a number of sources that one expects to find in any historical discussion of the Umayyad period. In particular, al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) appears only three times in these reports. He is mentioned once in the biography of al-Awzā'ī, where the citation is imbedded in another source and is not particularly important.[48] Al-Ṭabarī is also cited in Ibn 'Asākir's biography of al-Walīd ibn Yazīd. One of these citations reports a short poem while the other is al-Ṭabarī's lengthy account of al-Walīd's accession to the caliphate, his seizure of Hishām's treasury, and his eventual execution. This extended citation of al-Ṭabarī is nearly verbatim and provides the narrative framework for Ibn 'Asākir's entire biography of al-Walīd.[49] The *isnāds* of the two al-Ṭabarī reports are similar, though one appears to conflate several links. Both reports derive from a written work of Ḥaffāẓ ibn al-Ḥasan Abū l-Wafā' (d. 538/1144). Ibn 'Asākir's *isnād* offers no indication of the title or nature of the work from which he obtained this material. However, in his biography of Abū l-Wafā' Ibn 'Asākir indicates that he received one of al-Kattānī's works from Abū l-Wafā'.[50] Hence, Ibn 'Asākir's material from al-Ṭabarī likely came from the written works of al-Kattānī.

It is somewhat surprising that Ibn 'Asākir did not include citations from al-Ṭabarī in his biographies of other late Umayyad caliphs, since al-Ṭabarī's work was widely known and includes extensive information about the Umayyad period. Ibn 'Asākir certainly knew of al-Ṭabarī and his work. In his *TMD* he included a lengthy biography of al-Ṭabarī that mentions a number of al-Ṭabarī's works, including his *Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk* as well as his

[46]Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, XIX, 274–76; Ibn Manẓūr, XXIII, 170–71.

[47]*TMD*, XXXV, 150–51, 156–57; XI, 190, 196; XLVI, 402; LX, 201; al-Bukhārī, *Al-Ta'rīkh al-kabīr*, III.1, 326; IV.2, 21; I.2, 180–81; III.2, 373.

[48]*TMD*, XXXV, 209.

[49]*Ibid.*, LXIII, 337–44; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. M.J. de Goeje *et al.*, 15 vols. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1879–1901), II, 1795–1808.

[50]*TMD*, XIV, 406.

Tafsīr. Ibn 'Asākir acknowledged that al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rīkh* was well-known (*mashhūr*) and that it extended to al-Ṭabarī's own time.[51] While it is possible that Ibn 'Asākir had only those portions of al-Tabari that he derived from al-Kattānī's work, it seems unlikely, given his extensive knowledge of al-Ṭabarī and his works, that Ibn 'Asākir had such limited access to them. It is even more unlikely that he had extensive material from al-Ṭabarī regarding one Umayyad caliph and no information whatsoever about the caliphs who came before and after him. It is, therefore, essential to consider whether Ibn 'Asākir deliberately excluded information from al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rīkh* and what may have motivated him to do so.

It is possible that Ibn 'Asākir's determination to rely as much as possible on Syrian sources caused him to omit material from al-Ṭabarī and other non-Syrian sources. Other Iraqi historians one would expect to find in works on the Umayyad period are also absent from the reports examined in this study. Al-Madā'inī (d. *ca*. 225/840) appears only twice in the eight biographies discussed here. Al-Ṭabarī's report on al-Walīd's death, like much of al-Ṭabarī's material, is derived from al-Madā'inī. He also appears imbedded in one of the Khaṭīb's *isnāds*, but is otherwise not mentioned.[52] It is possible that al-Madā'inī's work was not available to Ibn 'Asākir and that he received reports on his authority only through intermediary sources, such as al-Ṭabarī and the Khaṭīb. Al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892), another major transmitter of al-Madā'inī's work, is entirely absent from these reports. Similarly, al-Wāqidī (d. 207/823) appears only rarely, even in connection with his student Ibn Sa'd. There is one report on his authority in the biography of al-Awzā'ī, as well as an obscure reference to him in Yazīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik's biography. He also appears in the list of Thawr ibn Yazīd's transmitters.[53] Otherwise, he is not mentioned. Hence, somewhat surprisingly, the mainstays of early Islamic historiography—al-Ṭabarī, al-Madā'inī, al-Balādhurī and al-Wāqidī—do not play a crucial role in Ibn 'Asākir's treatment of Umayyad figures. Instead, they are virtually absent. It appears that Ibn 'Asākir relied on Syrian sources whenever possible and often excluded reports from more noted

[51] Ibn 'Asākir's biography of al-Ṭabarī appears in *Introductio, Glossarium, Addenda et Emendanda*, ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1901), ixix–xcvi. For Ibn 'Asākir's comments on al-Ṭabarī's works, see lxxxi–lxxxviii. See also Franz Rosenthal, "General Introduction," *The History of al-Ṭabarī* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), I, 80–134; *TMD*, LII, 188–213.

[52] *TMD*, LVII, 344–45.

[53] *Ibid*., XXXV, 206; XI, 184; LXV, 309.

Iraqi sources such as al-Madā'inī and al-Ṭabarī. It is unlikely that he was simply unaware of these important sources, particularly since he mentions al-Ṭabarī's work by name and commented on how extensive it was. Moreover, Ibn 'Asākir's own travels took him to Iraq, where he would surely have encountered the works of these great historians. While the evidence examined here does not permit a firm conclusion, it does appear that Ibn 'Asākir attempted to avoid relying on the well-established Iraqi historiographical tradition in his work. He did not entirely reject the Iraqi tradition, however, as evidenced by his frequent accurate citations of some Iraqi sources.

This examination of Ibn 'Asākir's sources for the late Umayyad period is by no means comprehensive. Indeed, of the 225+ citations in al-Awzā'ī's biography alone, only about 50 derive from the sources discussed above. A number of factors complicate a more thorough examination of Ibn 'Asākir's sources. Aside from the difficulties created by the sheer number of citations, little is known about many of Ibn 'Asākir's immediate predecessors, since he seldom included their biographies in his *TMD* and other sources mention only a few of them.

The nature of Ibn 'Asākir's *isnāds* also makes tracing his sources rather difficult. He did not consistently distinguish between written sources and other types of reports. For instance, as mentioned above, only one of the 39 citations of Abū Zur'a's *Ta'rīkh* offers any indication that a written source was used. Titles of written works are rarely mentioned and, when mentioned, are rarely complete. Even in his biographies of other historians, Ibn 'Asākir seldom lists the titles of the subject's work. In addition, the scribal shorthand used in Ibn 'Asākir's *isnāds* sometimes creates confusion. Often Ibn 'Asākir refers to transmitters only by their *kunyas*. Hence, distinguishing between the plethora of Abū l-Qāsims and Abū Muḥammads becomes rather difficult. For instance, the Abū Zur'a *isnād* discussed above often appears as: Abū Muḥammad ← Abū Muḥammad ← Abū Muḥammad ← Abū l-Maymūn ← Abū Zur'a.

Despite these difficulties, this rather cursory examination of Ibn 'Asākir's citation of known sources reveals that he reproduced the information that came to him with meticulous accuracy. Most of the citations discussed above are verbatim quotations. Even in long quotations, such as al-Ṭabarī's report on al-Walīd, very few variations appear. In fact, when variations do occur, Ibn 'Asākir's versions often appear to contain corrections to earlier sources rather than errors in their reproduction. When multiple versions of particular reports existed, Ibn 'Asākir included variant readings. In general, the

last version cited appears to be his preferred version. However, many more reports would have to be examined to determine with any certainty what Ibn 'Asākir indicated by the order in which he presented variant readings.

Ibn 'Asākir's consistently accurate quotations of earlier sources also reveals something about the sources he cited. The texts of these sources appear to have been relatively fixed by Ibn 'Asākir's time. While he evidently had multiple versions of Ibn Sa'd's *Ṭabaqāt*, these were distinct texts, each reported by different transmitters. These texts were sufficiently well-established that they could not be merged into a single text. In fact, Ibn 'Asākir's citation of earlier sources illustrates that each of these particular texts had ceased to evolve and had reached their final forms by the sixth/twelfth century.

The Structure of Ibn 'Asākir's Biographies

Ibn 'Asākir did not simply copy the material he found in his sources. Instead, he rearranged material from his sources to accommodate the well-defined structure of his biographies. The sources Ibn 'Asākir relied upon were structured in a variety of ways. Some, such as al-Bukhārī's *Ta'rīkh*, contain concise biographies with few anecdotal details. Others, such as Abū Nu'aym's *Ḥilya*, are essentially collections of anecdotes, while still others are chronicles organized by year rather than by topic. He often divided biographical entries from his sources into shorter segments and arranged them topically. For instance, Ibn Abī Ḥātim's report on Makḥūl in his *Al-Jarḥ wa-l-ta'dīl* comprises approximately one page of text. Rather than simply copying this short report, Ibn 'Asākir divided it into four shorter segments that appear in different places in his biography of Makḥūl. The entire Ibn Abī Ḥātim report is included, but its contents are redistributed according to the demands of Ibn 'Asākir's structure.[54] Similarly, Ibn 'Asākir divided the short reports contained in Khalīfa's *Ṭabaqāt*, placing portions documenting birth dates at the beginning of his reports and documentation of death dates at the end. In his biography of Marwān, Ibn 'Asākir extracted a number of short reports of Marwān's campaigns from Khalīfa's chronicle and created a coherent narrative from them.[55] Rather than simply copying material as he found it, Ibn 'Asākir molded the information he acquired to fit within the

[54]Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Jarḥ*, VIII, 407–408; *TMD*, LX, 201–202, 206, 208, 212.
[55]*TMD*, LVII, 319–47; Khalīfa, *Ta'rīkh*, 339, 359, 362–64, 367, 391–93, 427–28, 468.

structural constraints he established while retaining all of the information contained in his sources.

The structure of Ibn 'Asākir's reports is quite consistent and will be familiar to anyone who has used later biographical sources. In his biographies of scholars, Ibn 'Asākir began by documenting conflicting reports regarding the scholar's name, lineage, and birth date. He then compiled lists of transmitters from whom the scholar learned *ḥadīth* and of those who learned *ḥadīth* from him. A sample of *ḥadīth* reports transmitted on the scholar's authority usually follows the lists of transmitters. The number of *ḥadīth* reports included varies and these reports clearly do not comprise the entire corpus of the scholar's *ḥadīth* knowledge. Ibn 'Asākir's criteria for choosing these reports and what he intended to convey by them are difficult to ascertain.[56] Following the sample of *ḥadīth*, a series of anecdotes about the scholar's abilities and comparisons to other scholars is typically included. Finally, the biographies conclude with reports regarding the scholar's death, disagreements about the date of his death and, occasionally, details of his funeral.

This structure is quite similar to that found in later biographical dictionaries, such as al-Mizzī's *Tahdhīb al-kamāl* and Ibn Ḥajar's *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*. However, this structure is a significant departure from the organizational schemes found in most of Ibn 'Asākir's sources and represents a substantial restructuring of the materials that were available to him. Only the biographies in the Khaṭīb's *Ta'rīkh Baghdād* exhibit a structure similar to Ibn 'Asākir's organizational scheme. Ibn 'Asākir's other sources were organized along different lines. While the Khāṭīb's work appears to have been a model for Ibn 'Asākir's organization, its structure was not as sophisticated as Ibn 'Asākir's and the work lacks the almost obsessive attention to detail, particularly in source citations, evident in the *TMD*. While the Khaṭīb may have developed the genre of city histories in Arabic historiography, Ibn 'Asākir greatly improved it. His influence on later biographical writing is particularly evident in al-Mizzī's work, where biographical entries are closely modeled on Ibn 'Asākir's *TMD*, though with considerably less attention to *isnād* citations.[57]

[56]For an interesting theory regarding these "signpost" *ḥadīth* reports, see Fred Donner's contribution to this volume, above, 51–52.
[57]There is also some evidence that al-Mizzī copied some of his material from Ibn 'Asākir, without actually citing Ibn 'Asākir as his source. Further research is necessary to determine the extent of al-Mizzī's reliance on Ibn 'Asākir, however.

Ibn ʿAsākir's biographies of caliphs are structured somewhat differently. These exhibit a more coherent narrative approach than his biographies of scholars. Like the scholar entries, they typically begin with a discussion of the caliph's name and lineage, about which there is generally little disagreement. Physical descriptions of the caliphs usually follow. The biographies of scholars typically lack such material, except occasional mention of the scholars' choice of attire. Ibn ʿAsākir's biographies of caliphs continue in a more narrative form, detailing events in the caliphs' lives and concluding with their deaths.

In his longer biographies of Marwān and al-Walīd, Ibn ʿAsākir used the narrative from a particular source as a framework for other materials. Details of Marwān's life were derived primarily from Khalīfa's *Taʾrīkh*, which contains a fairly detailed account of his defeat and flight, but lacks any reference to the battle of the Zāb. Oddly, Ibn ʿAsākir did not augment Khalīfa's report with information from al-Ṭabarī, al-Madāʾinī or other sources. In contrast, Ibn ʿAsākir's biography of al-Walīd relies heavily on al-Ṭabarī. In fact, as discussed above, al-Ṭabarī 's report provides the framework for the entire biography. While Ibn ʿAsākir's exclusion of some references to al-Ṭabarī remains puzzling, in his biographies of caliphs he utilized a slightly different organizational structure that was more capable of incorporating extended narratives from other sources. In the biographies of scholars, Ibn ʿAsākir manipulated his sources more extensively, adapting a variety of non-narrative sources to fit the structure of his presentation. Hence his biographies of scholars lack long sections of narrative, perhaps because scholars' accomplishments and reputations were more important to the author (and the reader) than the narrative chronology of their lives. The biographies of caliphs exhibit less of this manipulation. However, the exclusion of significant historical sources, particularly prominent Iraqi sources, suggests that Ibn ʿAsākir may have manipulated his biographies of caliphs by choosing which narrative to include rather than by dissecting his sources and imposing a new organizational scheme upon them. In any case, it is clear that Ibn ʿAsākir was not merely compiling all available materials, but that he instead made rather deliberate decisions about what to include in his biographies and how to arrange his material.

Conclusion

Ibn ʿAsākir's *TMD* is clearly an important source for Umayyad history. This study has illustrated that Ibn ʿAsākir cited earlier sources reliably

and with admirable accuracy. This study has by no means covered Ibn ʿAsākir's sources exhaustively. Indeed, there are a plethora of sources that remain unidentified and, in some cases, unidentifiable. However, based on Ibn ʿAsākir's accurate citation of these few well-known sources, it is reasonable to assume that he accurately recorded information from those sources that are lost as well.

This study has also demonstrated that Ibn ʿAsākir used his sources in an innovative manner and that he manipulated the material he extracted from earlier sources to fit his own organizational conceptions. The consistent structure Ibn ʿAsākir established for his biographical entries profoundly influenced the works of later biographical writers, such as al-Mizzī and Ibn Ḥajar, who adopted his structure without significant revisions. While the structure Ibn ʿAsākir adopted was not rigid, as the variations between the arrangement of biographies of caliphs and scholars illustrates, it did create an orderly framework for presenting important details of the lives of scholars and other important figures.

6

Community versus Contention: Ibn 'Asākir and 'Abbāsid Syria

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Introduction

It is one of those paradoxes common to early Islamic historiography that, as far as our sources are concerned, 'Abbāsid history begins in Syria while at the same time Syrian history ends with the 'Abbāsids. Even though, as the story goes, the 'Abbāsid family first hatched their revolution from the family estate at Ḥumayma in southern Syria, due to the new geographical and political interests that they served, the Arabic chronicles and universal histories of the 'Abbāsid era tended to ignore developments in Syria. As a result, the very nature of the traditional sources and the fragmentary picture of Syria that they present form an obstacle that anyone studying early Islamic Syria must surmount. Fortunately, Ibn 'Asākir's *TMD* offers a large and as yet unmined reserve of literary-historical material on 'Abbāsid history. How useful is this new material for our understanding of the history of Syria in the 'Abbāsid period?

Even a brief sounding into Ibn 'Asākir's *TMD* makes it clear that the new 'Abbāsid material in it stands to significantly alter established images of Syria under 'Abbāsid rule. As with his coverage of other historical periods, Ibn 'Asākir's coverage of the personalities and events of the 'Abbāsid period relies on excerpts from many disparate sources, many of which no longer survive.[1] Ibn 'Asākir's *TMD* is thus the sole source for a body of new material

[1]See Ahmad Shboul, "Change and Continuity in Early Islamic Damascus," *ARAM* 6 (1994), 67–102, especially 67–78 for a discussion of Ibn 'Asākir's sources.

on 'Abbāsid history that has been utterly ignored by previous scholarship. However, *TMD* is no panacea for the ills of early Islamic historiography, and the work is more useful for some historical questions than for others. For the 'Abbāsid period in particular, Ibn 'Asākir is most useful as a chronicler of two elite groups within Syrian society: the 'Abbāsid provincial governors (*umarā'*, sing. *amīr*) and Syria's local notables (the *ashrāf*).

To some degree, Ibn 'Asākir was obliged to concentrate on individuals from these two social groups. On the one hand, pre-modern historical writing in general tends to be by and about elite groups and *TMD* is, of course, no exception to this rule. On the other hand, Ibn 'Asākir was also constrained by the specific source material available to him. His coverage is, therefore, in some way likely to reflect the coverage of his sources. In this respect, Ibn 'Asākir's preoccupation with governors and notables reflects the concerns of earlier historians familiar to him. However, as with other periods, Ibn 'Asākir did not merely use his *TMD* as a vehicle for passively reproducing earlier material on 'Abbāsid Syria. On the contrary, Ibn 'Asākir selected, ordered and commented upon this material in both explicit and implicit ways. By examining how Ibn 'Asākir treated this earlier material, we can begin to grasp his understanding of 'Abbāsid Syria and of where it fit into the broader currents of Islamic history as he imagined them.

What follows is an attempt to do just that, arranged in three parts. The first part is a statement of the general historiographical problem of 'Abbāsid Syria, with some possible solutions. The second part offers one of these solutions, the use of prosopographical material. In particular, this second part highlights what Ibn 'Asākir has to offer for 'Abbāsid history and analyzes some of his sources. Finally, the third part examines Ibn 'Asākir's treatment of one event in particular, the revolt of the tribal notable Abū l-Haydhām al-Murrī in 177/793. This case-study demonstrates both the limits that earlier sources imposed upon his own work and the ways in which he could still be true to his own unique vision of Islamic history.

The Historiographical Problem of 'Abbāsid Syria

Traditionally, Islamic historians have written 'Abbāsid history utilizing a fairly limited corpus of literary sources, almost exclusively early Arabic chronicles. Without question, the most important of these is the *Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk* of al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923).[2] Al-Ṭabarī's narrative—at least that

[2]Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, 15 vols., ed. M.J. de Goeje *et al.* (Leiden:

beginning with the rise of Islam—is arranged annalistically, with entries for the events of each year (with a few digressions) following in succession until 302/915. As for al-Ṭabarī's treatment of events in Syria, it can be schematized as follows: the first Muslim raids; the Islamic conquests; 'Alī's struggle with Mu'āwiya, governor of Syria; the history of the Umayyad caliphate; the 'Abbāsid revolution; the history of the 'Abbāsid caliphate. Even during his coverage of the Syrian-based Umayyad dynasty, al-Ṭabarī provides little information on Syrian affairs in his narrative, being preoccupied with the mounting opposition to Umayyad rule in Arabia, the eastern provinces, and especially Iraq.

This Iraqi focus becomes even more pronounced with the accession of Abū l-'Abbās al-Saffāḥ as the first 'Abbāsid caliph at al-Kūfa in 132/749. Henceforth, the terse information that al-Ṭabarī's narrative provides about 'Abbāsid Syria strikes one as collections of details, and can be classified as follows: 1) accounts of the 'Abbāsid pursuit and massacre of members of the Umayyad dynasty; 2) accounts of rebellions or insurrections against the 'Abbāsid central government; 3) accounts of warfare carried out on the Byzantine frontier in northern Syria and Anatolia; 4) lists of governors of the province (usually, only the governor of Damascus is named; sub-governors of the various regional centers are only rarely mentioned); 5) incidental references, as when a caliph passes through Syria on his way to the frontier or on pilgrimage, or in the event of an extraordinary occurrence, such as an earthquake. This scatter-shot scheme of the history of 'Abbāsid Syria in al-Ṭabarī is for the most part characteristic of all the Islamic Arabic narrative sources, such as al-Ya'qūbī (d. 284/897),[3] al-Mas'ūdī (d. 345/956),[4] and al-Balādhurī (d. *ca.* 279/892),[5] and is the single great-

E.J. Brill, 1879–1901). English translation: *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, 39 vols., various translators, general ed. Ehsan Yarshater (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985–2000).

[3]Al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rīkh*, 2 vols., ed. M.T. Houtsma (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1883).

[4]Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab wa-ma'ādin al-jawhar*, 9 vols., ed. and trans. C. Barbier de Meynard and P. de Courteille as *Les prairies d'or*, (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1861–77). This edition and translation has been revised under the same same title by Charles Pellat; Arabic text: 7 vols. (Beirut: al-Jāmi'a al-lubnānīya, 1965–79); French translation: 5 vols. (Paris: Société asiatique, 1965–74). Much the same coverage exists in his historico-geographical work, *Al-Tanbīh wa-l-ishrāf*, ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1894); trans. Bernard Carra de Vaux as *Le Livre de l'avertissement et de la révision* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1896).

[5]Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*. The publication history of this vital work is somewhat

est problem confronting anyone engaging in historical research on 'Abbāsid Syria.

However, this kind of coverage is hardly unique to Syria alone. Rather, the spotty regional coverage of the traditional Islamic sources is a feature common to most provinces of the caliphate; some areas (like North Africa) received even less notice than Syria. In fact, it may be importunate to expect anything else given the interests that the traditional Islamic narrative sources served. For, in addition to being produced from an Iraq-centered point of view, the traditional Islamic sources are in large part also composed as narratives relating in seamless fashion their own imperative vision of the history of the Muslim community as a whole, to which most other literary and historical concerns are secondary. It is this vision that John Wansbrough has characterized as "salvation history", a history composed not only as a chain of causalities arranged in a linear narrative, but more specifically a history that is kerygmatic, that proclaims the ultimate verity of a new religious dispensation. For Wansbrough, "the substance of proclamation is less important than the fact of assertion, that a case is being argued, evidence gathered, and proofs adduced," a fact, one must assume, that would preclude there being any purely objective account of Islamic origins from these sources.[6] As one of Wansbrough's more perspicacious commentators put it: "All the components of Islamic salvation history are meant to witness the same point of faith, namely, an understanding of history that sees God's role in directing the affairs of humankind."[7]

Although originally propounded in the context of an analysis of sources relating the career of Muḥammad, the notion of an Islamic salvation (or, perhaps better, "election"[8]) history is obviously relevant to historical writ-

complex, and I will refrain from citing all the partial editions and the few partial translations now available. For the contents of the entire Istanbul Ms. (Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi Ms. Reis ül-Küttab [Asir Efendi]), see *ibid.*, I, ed. Muḥammad Ḥamīd Allāh (Cairo: Dār al-ma'ārif, 1959), 34–53. The volume of central significance for this study is that treating the Banū l-'Abbās: *ibid.*, III, ed. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Dūrī (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1978).

[6]John Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), ix.

[7]Andrew Rippin, "Literary Analysis of Qur'ān, *Tafsīr*, and *Sīra*: the Methodologies of John Wansbrough," in Richard Martin, ed., *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985), 154.

[8]I.e. these sources relate the fortunes of God's chosen people and the fulfillment of His will through them, not the ways in which they have been saved from damnation, in the

ing about later eras as well. In particular, for early Islamic chroniclers like al-Ṭabarī, the salvation of the community was inextricably linked with the 'Abbāsid house. In such a view of the history of the Muslim community, stress is given to the precedents, rise, and triumph of the "blessed dynasty", which liked to see itself as the restorer of the Prophet's family to the leadership of the community. This understanding of 'Abbāsid legitimacy had predictable results for the writing of history. However they might have personally felt about the ruling dynasty, the early chroniclers lived and wrote in a world where early Islamic history was "'Abbāsid history" in more than one sense.[9]

Now, an interest in relating Islamic salvation history does not necessarily mean excluding Syria. But when it is wedded to 'Abbāsid imperial history, such an historical vision accords little room for consistent information about a region like Syria, the former metropolitan province of the Umayyad dynasty, the defeated rivals of the 'Abbāsid house. When combined with an Iraq-centered geographical viewpoint, the disinterest in Syrian affairs is amplified even further. In this way, these early narratives of salvation and/or imperial history tend to obscure the local history of Syria, leaving little for the historian to analyze.

There are two ways to counter and supplement the picture of 'Abbāsid Syria provided by these sources. First, one can step outside the Islamic Arabic literary tradition altogether, finding a corrective in non-Muslim sources in Greek, Syriac, Armenian, etc.[10] Of course, this does not solve the problem, since all of these sources simply present a different variation of the same problem noted with the Islamic Arabic sources. Although they may fill in gaps and occasionally provide invaluable local views, simply substituting the traditional Islamic Arabic narrative view of 'Abbāsid Syria with another, non-Islamic or non-Arabic narrative view will not necessarily advance our understanding of this period appreciably. Moreover, the close ties between these various narrative traditions, in particular the Greek, Syriac and Arabic traditions, limits their potential for correcting the problems that the traditional Islamic Arabic narratives present.[11]

Other sources outside the traditional narrative sources provide another alternative. In particular, certain literary sources often considered to be "marginal" works are of direct relevance for understanding the local ideological currents and indigenous intellectual responses to 'Abbāsid hegemony. Such sources include the genre of *faḍā'il* literature (literature in praise of cities or regions), of which Jerusalem and Damascus have received the most attention.[12] Similarly, there exists a local Syrian apocalyptic tradition preserved from the late Umayyad and early 'Abbāsid period. In so far as the 'Abbāsid revolution itself rode the wave of apocalyptic legitimacy, this local Syrian tradition is particularly crucial for our understanding of local responses to 'Abbāsid rule.[13] In addition, the scant documentary sources

strictly Christian sense of "salvation". On this distinction, see Wansbrough, *Sectarian Milieu*, 147; Rippin, "Literary Analysis," 155.

[9]These ideas are explored with greater depth in Tayeb El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Hārūn Al-Rashīd and the Narrative of the Abbasid Caliphate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). See also the 'Abbāsid (Manṣūrid) dynastic concerns expressed in 'Abbāsid historical writing on the 'Abbāsid revolution: Jacob Lassner, *Islamic Revolution and Historical Memory: Abbasid Apologetics and the Art of Historical Writing* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1986); *idem.*, "The 'Abbasid *Dawla*: an Essay on the Concept of Revolution in Early Islam," in F.M. Clover and R.S. Humphreys, eds., *Tradition and Innovation in Late Antiquity* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 247–70.

[10]On non-Muslim sources for early Islamic history (with relevance for 'Abbāsid history), see now the survey of Robert Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: a Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1997). On Syriac sources in particular see Lawrence I. Conrad, "Syriac Perspectives on Bilâd al-Shâm During the Abbasid Period," in Muhammad Adnan al-Bakhit and Robert Schick, eds., *Bilād al-Shām During the Abbasid Period (132 A.H./750 A.D.-451 A.H./1059 A.D.): Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on the History of Bilād al-Shām, 7-11 Sha'ban 1410 A.H./4-8 March, 1990* (Amman: Lajnat ta'rīkh Bilād al-Shām, 1991), 1–44.

[11]On the interrelationship of Muslim and non-Muslim historiographical traditions, see in particular Lawrence I. Conrad, "Theophanes and the Arabic Historical Tradition: Some Indications of Intercultural Transmission," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 15 (1990), 1–41, and also *idem*, "The Conquest of Arwād: a Source-Critical Study in the Historiography of the Early Medieval Near East," in Averil Cameron and Lawrence I. Conrad, eds., *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East, I: Problems in the Literary Source Material* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1992), 317–402.

[12]The earliest such examples are: Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Wāsiṭī (fl. 410/1019), *Faḍā'il al-bayt al-muqaddas*, ed. Isaac Hasson (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1979), and 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Raba'ī (d. 434/1043), *Faḍā'il al-Shām wa-Dimashq*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid (Damascus: Maṭba'at al-taraqqī, 1950). Additionally, many such *faḍā'il* traditions can be found in the geographical preamble and elsewhere in *TMD*.

[13]Nu'aym ibn Ḥammād, *Kitāb al-fitan*, British Museum Ms. Or. 9449; ed. Suhayl Zakkar (Damascus: Dār al-fikr, 1993). On this work see Wilferd Madelung, "Apocalyptic Prophecies in Ḥimṣ in the Umayyad Age," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 31 (1986), 141–85, and Michael Cook, "An Early Islamic Apocalyptic Chronicle," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 52 (1993), 25–29.

(numismatic, papyrological, archaeological) relevant to this study can provide some otherwise unavailable information.[14]

Ibn 'Asākir and 'Abbāsid Syria

In addition to stepping outside the early Islamic historical tradition, a second method of supplementing the received picture of 'Abbāsid Syria is to go deeper within the traditional Islamic narrative sources. As mentioned above, we can characterize much of what reliable information the traditional narrative sources provide as detail: the names of governors, generals, judges, where they held office, and when. This type of information readily lends itself to a prosopographical study. Early in this century, European historians used the prosopographical approach as a method of "seeing behind" the traditional historical narratives.[15] In early Islamic history, this approach has been utilized with important results by Patricia Crone in her book *Slaves on Horses*.[16] In Crone's words:

> The obvious way to tackle early Islamic history is, in other words, prosopographical. To the extent that the pages of the Muslim chronicles are littered with names, prosopography is of course nothing but a fancy word for what every historian of that period

[14]No full numismatic history of early 'Abbāsid Syria yet exists. For southern Syria, see Lutz Ilisch, *Sylloge Numorum Arabicorum Tübingen*, IVa: *Bilād aš-Šām*, I: *Palästina* (Tübingen: Ernst Wasmuth Verlag, 1993). For the era of al-Ma'mūn, see Samīr Shammā, *Aḥdāth 'aṣr al-Ma'mūn kamā tarwayhā al-nuqūd* [English title: *The Time of al-Ma'mūn in the Light of Numismatic Evidence*] (Irbid: Yarmouk University, 1995). Papyrolgical evidence is thin indeed for 'Abbāsid Syria. See Nabia Abbott, "Arabic Papyri of the Reign of Ǧa'far al-Mutawakkil 'ala-llāh (AH 232–47/AD 847–61), *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 92 (1938), 88–135. The number of excavated sites in Syria containing deposits datable to the early 'Abbāsid period is comparatively large, and a detailed listing of all the relevant sites would be very long. For general comments on the southern Bilād al-Shām, see Donald S. Whitcomb, "Archaeology of the Abbasid Period: the Example of Jordan," *Archéologie islamique* 1 (1990), 75–85, and the variety of archaeological papers presented in al-Bakhit and Schick, eds., *Bilād al-Shām During the Abbasid Period*. The encyclopedic work of Robert Schick, *The Christian Communities of Palestine from Byzantine to Islamic Rule: a Historical and Archaeological Study* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1995) is also relevant to southern Syria in the 'Abbāsid period.

[15]For an intelligent discussion of the advantages and potential pitfalls of such an approach, see Lawrence Stone, "Prosopography," *Daedalus* (Winter, 1971), 46–79.

[16]Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses: the Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980). Unfortunately, Crone's analysis of the elite of Syria does not extend (systematically) beyond the Umayyad period.

> finds himself to be doing....the vast amount of information [in accompanying narratives] is gossip which cannot be used for what it asserts, only for what it conveys, primarily the background and status of the persons gossipped about.[17]

As it happens, there are a number of extremely important collections of such "gossip" written in and about Syria. For the early Islamic period, Ibn 'Asākir's *TMD* is much more valuable than previous generations of historians have realized, preserving, as it does, entire works or citations from works from a very early period.[18] Most of these works are taken up with the concerns of the 'Abbāsid court and with provincial administration. In particular, Ibn 'Asākir has preserved the invaluable *Tasmiyat umarā' Dimashq* [Name-list of the Governors of Damascus] of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Rāzī (d. 347/958), the earliest such work devoted to the ruling strata of Syrian society.[19] Prior to the recent scholarly "rediscovery" of Ibn 'Asākir's *TMD*, one had to rely on the skeletal and quite late citations of this work in al-Ṣafadī's (d. 766/1363) *Kitāb umarā' al-Shām*.[20] Even though al-Ṣafadī's work provides a framework for understanding the sequence of provincial governors in Syria (although to my knowledge no one has fully exploited it), it leaves out al-Rāzī's sometimes lengthy biographical accounts of these governors, which can only be found in *TMD*. Take, for example, al-Rāzī's account of Sālim ibn Ḥāmid, governor of Damascus under the caliph al-Mutawakkil (r. 232–47/847–61). In this account, which appears to be unique, al-Rāzī gives a vivid description of the kinds of problems that new governors could bring to their post. In this case, Sālim's complement of Arab tribesmen upset the already tense tribal-factional balance in the city, starting a riot. As a result, more troops and a Turkish governor (who would be expected to be above Arab tribal-factional

[17]*Ibid.*, 16–17.

[18]Gerhard Conrad in particular has stressed *TMD* as an important source for early Islamic history. For his views and the hostile judgements of earlier Orientalists, see his "Zur Bedeutung des Tārīḫ Madīnat Dimašq als historische Quelle," in Werner Diem and Abdoldjavad Falaturi, eds., *XXIV. deutscher Orientalistentag. Ausgewählte Vorträge*, *ZDMG Supplement* 8 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1990), 271–82.

[19]On this work, see Conrad, "Bedeutung," 277–81. Conrad has also produced a meticulous examination of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Rāzī's *oeuvre*, *Abū'l-Ḥusain al-Rāzī (-347/958) und seine Schriften. Untersuchungen zur frühen damaszener Geschichtsschreibung* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1991); see 23–51 on the *Tasmiyat umarā' Dimashq*.

[20]Al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb umarā' Dimashq fī l-islām*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid (Damascus: al-Majma' al-'ilmī al-'arabī, 1955). The title of the work is *Kitāb umarā' al-Shām*. Al-Munajjid altered the title for his edition.

politics) were sent from Sāmarrā to stop the fighting and replace Sālim.[21] Al-Rāzī's less substantial *Tasmiyat kuttāb umarā' Dimashq* [Name-List of the Scribes of the Governors of Damascus] is of similar value for a class of lower-ranking officials.[22]

Ibn 'Asākir also cites other similar works or name-lists of members of the 'Abbāsid ruling elite in Syria. Among these, it is worth mentioning the *Tasmiyat man qadima Dimashq ma'a al-Mutawakkil* [Name-List of Those Who Came to Damascus with al-Mutawakkil], a detailed "guest's list" of the members of the caliph al-Mutawakkil's retinue when he visited the Syrian capital in 244/858. Because the traditional narrative sources have had so little of substance to say about the caliph's visit, this event has puzzled historians for some time. But, as I have discussed elsewhere, this list of al-Mutawakkil's companions answers a number of questions about what the caliph was doing in Damascus, and raises some new ones as well.[23] For 'Abbāsid history outside of Syria, *TMD* has its share of entries for 'Abbāsid caliphs and elites, provided they have at least a tenuous association with Syria. Although Ibn 'Asākir relies heavily on the *Ta'rīkh Baghdād* for information on caliphs and courtiers, no one has really made a close assessment of what is new in these entries.[24]

But *TMD* is, above all, a local history, and Ibn 'Asākir accordingly provides a remarkable amount of new source material on local Syrian elites. Predictably, these are often name-lists, like the name-lists of the *qāḍīs* (judges) of Damascus that Gerhard Conrad has studied, which provide a good idea of the kinds of Syrians who held the post of *qāḍī* and where and when they did so. Taken as a whole, these apparently unobtrusive reports from *TMD* form the basis for a collective biography of the *'ulamā'* of Syria and a valuable testament to the teachings and practice of the now-defunct legal school of the Syrian jurist al-Awzā'ī (d. 157/774).[25] Another such example is the *Tasmiyat*

[21]Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 80 vols., ed. 'Umar al-'Amrāwī and 'Alī Shīrī (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1995–2001), XX, 38–39.

[22]Conrad, *Abū'l-Ḥusain al-Rāzī*, 52–68.

[23]Paul M. Cobb, "Al-Mutawakkil's Damascus: a New 'Abbasid Capital?," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 58 (1999), 241–57.

[24]See the contribution of Steven C. Judd in this volume, 88–89. A cursory survey of the entries of a few of the 'Abbāsid caliphs shows that the *Ta'rīkh Baghdād*, while important, is only one of many sources that Ibn 'Asākir used. Cf. the entries for al-Manṣūr (*TMD*, XXXII, 298–348) and al-Ma'mūn (XXX, 275–341).

[25]Gerhard Conrad, *Die Quḍāt Dimašq und der Maḏhab al-Auzā'ī. Materialen zur syrischen Rechtsgeschichte* (Beirut: In Kommission bei Franz Steiner Verlag Stuttgart,

man kāna bi-Dimashq wa-Ghūṭatiha min banī Umayya [Name-List of Those Umayyads Who Lived in Damascus and Its Ghūṭa], by Ibn Abī l-'Ajā'iz al-Azdī (d. *ca.* 320/932). This work (as the title suggests) is a list of those members of the Umayyad family who settled in Damascus and its environs.[26] This work merely names Marwānid and Sufyānid kinsmen and where they lived in the vicinity of Damascus. In many cases, these Umayyad kinsmen are quite obscure. But Arabic names, of course, are also good records of patrilineage, with a given name ("so-and-so son of so-and-so son of so-and-so...") commonly preserving the patrlineage of its bearer extending back many generations. Since many of the personages in Ibn Abī l-'Ajā'iz's list are descendants of well-known Umayyads, one can estimate when a given subject in this list lived by simply taking the death-date of their better-known ancestor and counting the number of generations that intervene between that of their ancestor and their own generation. The results are, of course, estimates, and most of this *tasmiya* does concern the Umayyad period. Even still, there is evidence that a large number of the Umayyad kinsmen on Ibn Abī l-'Ajā'iz's list were alive and prospering in Syria well into the 'Abbāsid period.

But not all that Ibn 'Asākir has to offer is of the *tasmiya* or "name-list" variety. *TMD* also offers a significant number of complete entries for local Syrian elites of the 'Abbāsid era who are largely if not completely unknown to any other sources. To take one example: we know from al-Ṭabarī and al-Ya'qūbī that during the chaos of the Fourth Civil War between the caliphal claimants al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn, many of the provinces of the caliphate, including Syria, were wracked by "revolts" by local power-holders hoping to gain a certain amount of autonomy while the central government was preoccupied. The traditional early narrative sources offer us only fragments of one such revolt in Damascus, namely that in 195/811, there emerged in Damascus one 'Alī ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Khālid al-Sufyānī. A descendant of the Umayyad caliph Mu'āwiya, he claimed the caliphate for himself and expelled al-Amīn's governor from the city.[27] Ibn 'Asākir, however, offers a lengthy

1994). On Ibn 'Asākir and al-Awzā'ī, see also Steven C. Judd's contribution to this volume, 79–80, 81, 82.

[26]See, e.g., *TMD*, XVII, 36; XXI, 97. On Ibn Abī l-'Ajā'iz, see Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid, *Mu'jam al-mu'arrikhīn al-dimashqiyīn wa-āthārihim al-makhṭūṭa wa-l-maṭbū'a* (Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-jadīd, 1978), 16; Conrad, *Abū'l-Ḥusain al-Rāzī*, 96–97.

[27]Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, III, 830; Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rīkh*, II, 532. Later chronicles that have been known to modern historians for decades do provide a fuller account of this revolt,

(eleven pages in the Dār al-fikr edition) entry for ʿAlī ibn ʿAbd Allāh, better known as Abū l-ʿUmayṭir al-Sufyānī.[28] Only from this entry and the plethora of accounts about the revolt scattered throughout *TMD* can we grasp the scope of this revolt, its aims, methods, and the individuals involved in it.[29] From the nondescript uprising of the traditional sources, the revolt of Abū l-ʿUmayṭir in Ibn ʿAsākir's work emerges instead as no less than a short-lived Umayyad counter-caliphate in Damascus, complete with bureaucracy, colored by millenarian beliefs, and supported by the disenfranchised tribal faction of the Yamanīya. Ibn ʿAsākir's work also provides vital details about the people who threw in their lot with Abū l-ʿUmayṭir: Umayyad kinsmen and Yamanī tribesmen from all over Syria and even reputable *ʿulamāʾ* like Abū l-Mushir al-Ghassānī (d. 218/833), later to become Syria's outspoken opponent of al-Maʾmūn's *miḥna* ("inquisition"). Similar entries exist for other local notables and Syrian elites, not all of them rebellious by any means, and it is through entries like these that the work of Ibn ʿAsākir truly stands out.

Yet, despite its richness, *TMD* has its share of limitations as well. These limitations are, on the whole, self-evident, but they are worth highlighting here. First, and most obviously, there is much that *TMD* does not discuss. We need not be too surprised that the interests of Ibn ʿAsākir and those of modern historians do not often coincide. As one would expect from a medieval biographical dictionary, non-elites are virtually non-existent. Written by a member of an elite social group for other elites, Ibn ʿAsākir's work has little or no place for peasants, merchants, and the urban poor. Of course, for similiar reasons, economic information for the ʿAbbāsid period is also scarce. However, the editions of Volumes I and II of *TMD*, containing a geographical survey of Syria and the city of Damascus in particular, have never really been examined in this regard depite the fact that they have long been available,

but these works are all based upon the *TMD* of Ibn ʿAsākir. See, for example, Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1234), *Al-Kāmil fī l-taʾrīkh*, 13 vols. (Beirut: Dār ṣādir and Dār Bayrūt, 1965–67), VI, 249–50.

[28] *TMD*, XLIII, 24–34. See also Ibn Manẓūr, *Mukhtaṣar taʾrīkh Dimashq li-Ibn ʿAsākir*, 29 vols., ed. Rūḥīyat al-Khās and Muḥammad Muṭīʿ al-Ḥāfiẓ (Damascus: Dār al-fikr, 1984–91), XVIII, 109–14.

[29] For the historical context of this revolt see Iḥsān ʿAbbās, *Taʾrīkh bilād al-Shām fī l-ʿaṣr al-ʿabbāsī, 132–255H/750–870M* (Amman: Lajnat taʾrīkh Bilād al-Shām, 1993), 53–61; Paul M. Cobb, *White Banners: Contention in ʿAbbasid Syria, 750–880* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 55–62.

and Volume II has even been translated and annotated.[30] Here, as elsewhere, serious work remains to be done.

Second, whether the material comes from Syria or Iraq, from Ibn ʿAsākir's own pen or earlier authorities, the many virtues of *TMD* cannot circumvent the very simple fact that with this work, as with the traditional chronicles and histories, the modern historian is still working with complex literary texts. Entries like that of the rebel Abū l-ʿUmayṭir, for all their wealth of detail, are still narratives that an author composed, including some materials, excluding others, and "spinning" his interpretations as he went. The fact that the very nature of Ibn ʿAsākir's work requires these narratives to be extracts ripped from larger narratives does not make evaluating them any easier. Anecdotes that once made sense to early Islamic contemporaries as part of a larger tale now seem to puzzle us today; occasionally, they confounded Ibn ʿAsākir himself. Whatever the particular topic of investigation, *TMD*, as a literary source, does not offer any *qualitative* advantage over other literary sources like the chronicles of al-Ṭabarī or al-Yaʿqūbī. If ʿAbbāsid historians are ever to profit from the new material contained in *TMD*, they must come to terms with this very fundamental point. Indeed, the material preserved in *TMD* from works that are now lost may actually help us to evaluate early Islamic narratives more closely.

Third, and most important: Ibn ʿAsākir's organizing principle for his work remains a mystery. Why did he include entries on certain people and not others? Certainly, the availability of relevant sources limited Ibn ʿAsākir's coverage of the ʿAbbāsid period. After all, Ibn ʿAsākir was writing in the time of Nūr al-Dīn al-Zangī and for someone of that time ʿAbbāsid history was, frankly, ancient history. It is therefore difficult to tell whether Ibn ʿAsākir's statement or silence on a given issue in ʿAbbāsid history arises from some partisan or ideological commitment on his part, or from the simple fact that the right sources were (or were not) available to him. This is not to say that Ibn ʿAsākir, as compiler of the ʿAbbāsid material in *TMD*, did not have such precommitments. Indeed, Ibn ʿAsākir seems to have had a very good idea of who was and who was not an appropriate subject for his work. In this regard, Ibn ʿAsākir was no less innocent of imposing an historical vision on the material before him than his earlier predecessors like al-Ṭabarī. However, the precise contours of Ibn ʿAsākir's vision of early Islamic history, and how

[30] Trans. Nikita Elisséeff as *La description de Damas d'Ibn ʿAsākir* (Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1959).

it affected the compilation of his entries on 'Abbāsid-era personages, will only be evident after close scrutiny of individual entries.

Tribal Factions and Fictions: the Case of Abū l-Haydhām al-Murrī

One revealing case-study of the intersection of Ibn 'Asākir's historical vision and the limits of his sources is his entry for the tribal notable and rebel Abū l-Haydhām al-Murrī (d. 182/798). Many other controversial figures existed who were the subject of Ibn 'Asākir's craft, such as Abū l-'Umayṭir, discussed above. However, that of Abū l-Haydhām is especially appropriate given that his entry is a sizeable, self-contained group of narratives, rather than a collection of fragments scattered about the whole of *TMD*, as is the case with many figures.[31] In compiling this entry, Ibn 'Asākir was forced to confront a number of obstacles that required him to be more explicit than usual about his own interpretation of his subject matter. On the one hand, Ibn 'Asākir's sources depict Abū l-Haydhām as imbued with *furūsīya*, the classic body of virtues of the idealized Arab warrior. As such, Abū l-Haydhām could serve for both Ibn 'Asākir and his sources as an emblem of the heroic past, or, at least, how the virtues of the once-heroic past were still alive in 'Abbāsid Syria. On the other hand, Abū l-Haydhām was an agent of sedition: a momentary opponent of the caliph himself and, by extension, an agent of *fitna*, the "discord" or "trouble" that threatens the unity and order of the Muslim community at both the mundane and cosmic levels. Given this pairing of virtues and vices, the case of Abū l-Haydhām placed Ibn 'Asākir in a potentially awkward position, requiring him to use strategies both explicit (such as glossing, commentary, and word-choice) and implicit (such as strategic placement, repetition, and stress) to incorporate this contentious Syrian notable into his broader vision of early Islamic history.

As with the revolt of Abū l-'Umayṭir al-Sufyānī, the traditional Arabic narrative sources are characteristically reticent about Abū l-Haydhām. With little variation, the jist of the traditional sources is simple: in the reign of the caliph al-Rashīd there was a violent outburst of tribal factionalism (*'aṣabīya*) in Damascus and its vicinity between Arab tribesmen. Historically, Arab tribesmen of the early Islamic period identified themselves with one of a small number of tribal factions, the two largest being those of Qays (or Muḍar) and Yaman. Although couched in the vocabulary of tribal genealogy, these factions had as much to do with the distribution of power and patronage as with anything else. Competition between factions, particularly when it involved the military, was one of the main destabilizing factors in early Islamic society.[32] In this particular instance of factional fighting in Damascus, the leader of Qays was one Abū l-Haydhām al-Murrī.[33]

[31]See *TMD*, XXVI, 62–87.

In contrast to the brief notices of the revolt in the traditional narrative sources, Ibn 'Asākir offers an immense entry for Abū l-Haydhām (26 pages in the Dār al-fikr edition) citing earlier detailed accounts of him and his revolt that historians like al-Ṭabarī and al-Ya'qūbī either ignored or only summarized.[34] The best way to appreciate Ibn 'Asākir's craft in this lengthy entry is to analyze its component parts as the reader encounters them.

Introductory Matter

Like all other entries in *TMD*, Abū l-Haydhām's entry begins with a listing of his name (*ism*), followed by Ibn 'Asākir's own brief description of the subject. This latter passage, usually no more than a few sentences (more often a few words) serves both to explain why a given entry has been included and, more rarely, as a synopsis of what follows. Abū l-Haydhām's *ism* is technically 'Āmir ibn 'Umāra ibn Khuraym, and Ibn 'Asākir follows his patrilineage back no less than nineteen generations to the eponymous founder of Abū l-Haydhām's tribe, Qays 'Aylān. Significantly, Ibn 'Asākir finishes this string of names by identifying Abū l-Haydhām as the "father of Abū 'Āmir Mūsā ibn 'Āmir", the latter being a Syrian traditionist of minor repute (d. 255/869).[35] Ibn 'Asākir thus registers Abū l-Haydhām for the reader first and foremost as the possessor of a notable tribal lineage, a member of the tribe of Banū Murra of the Qays tribal faction, and the father of one of the Syrian *'ulamā'*. Ibn 'Asākir's synopsis statement is more precise as to Abū l-Haydhām's significance:

> One of the famed paladins and renowned braves of the Arabs. The leader of Qays in the *fitna* that occured between them and

[32]On the development of factionalism in the early Islamic period, see Patricia Crone, "Were the Qays and Yemen of the Umayyad Period Political Parties?," *Der Islam* 71 (1994), 1–57; Cobb, *White Banners*, 68–75.

[33]Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, III, 624–27; al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rīkh*, II, 495. Ibn al-Athīr later summarized the contents of al-Madā'inī's account (see below), which he himself had encountered through Ibn 'Asākir (*Kāmil*, VI, 127–33). For the historical context of this revolt and its significance, see Cobb, *White Banners*, 82–92.

[34]See *TMD*, XXVI, 62–87.

[35]On him, see *TMD*, LX, 436–41; 'Abbās, *Bilād al-Shām*, 185.

> Yaman in Damascus in the days of al-Rashīd so that the situation was made grave and evil made strong. There are renowned verses attributed to him on those battles and famous historical accounts about those wars.[36]

Rarely in this entry is Ibn'Asākir's attitude toward Abū l-Haydhām more explictly stated. While Abū l-Haydhām *was* an Arab warrior of renown, he was also a rebel. Moreover, this rebellion was not just a temporary disruption of order, but rather a *fitna*, a deadly serious circumstance, in which evil was "made strong". As a major participant in such a *fitna*, Abū l-Haydhām was, for Ibn 'Asākir, a questionable figure, regardless of his heroic credentials.

Poetic Material

From this introductory matter Ibn 'Asākir then proceeds to present earlier source material relating to Abū l-Haydhām. The first extract is taken from the work of Muḥammad ibn 'Imrān al-Marzubānī (d. 370/980), a prolific belle-lettrist and author of numerous biographical collections devoted to early Islamic poets and their works.[37] Al-Marzubānī's extract is itself clearly an entry from an encyclopedic compilation of some kind, as indicated by its biographical heading: "Abū l-Haydhām 'Āmir ibn 'Umāra ibn Khuraym al-Murrī. A Syrian, he settled in Sijistān. His brother is 'Uthmān ibn 'Umāra, the patron of the poet Abū Ya'qūb al-Khuraymī." The main issue of this extract is clearly the "renowned verses" that Ibn 'Asākir mentions in his introductory matter. Al-Marzubānī goes on to describe how Hārūn al-Rashīd's governor in Sijistān killed Abū l-Haydhām's brother, leading Abū l-Haydhām to revolt in Syria. He then cites four lines of elegaic verse attributed to Abū l-Haydhām in honor of his slain brother, and goes on to add that as the revolt got out of hand, al-Rashīd began to despair, and so he sent another brother of Abū l-Haydhām to Syria to subdue him and return with him to the caliphal court at al-Raqqa. Once captured, Abū l-Haydhām recited some flattering

[36]*TMD*, XXVI, 62: *aḥad fursān al-'arab al-madhkūrīn wa-shuj'ānihim al-mashhūrīn wa-huwa za'īm Qays fī l-fitna allatī waqa'at baynahim wa-bayna al-Yaman bi-Dimashq fī ayyām al-Rashīd ḥattā tafāqama al-amr wa-istaḥkama al-sharr wa-lahu ash'ār fī tilka l-waqā'i' mashhūra wa-akhbār fī l-ḥurūb madhkūra.*

[37]*Ibid.*, XXVI, 62–63. The *isnād* or chain of authorities for this extract is as follows: Abū l-Ḥusayn Muḥammad ibn Kāmil ← Abū Ja'far ibn al-Muslima ← Abū 'Ubayd Allāh Muḥammad ibn 'Imrān al-Marzubānī. On al-Marzubānī and his works, see R. Sellheim, art. "al-Marzubānī" in *EI*², VI, 634a–635b. It is not clear from what specific work this extract comes.

verses to the caliph, and so he released him. Al-Marzubānī's extract ends with the statement that the elegaic verses attributed to Abū l-Haydhām have also been attributed to another Syrian whose brother was killed during the revolt. But as al-Marzubānī affirms, "the truth of the matter is that they belong to Abū l-Haydhām". To corroborate this affirmation, Ibn 'Asākir then produces the elegaic verses yet again, this time in an extract that quotes the genealogist al-Zubayr ibn Bakkār (d. 256/870) as having attributed these verses to Abū l-Haydhām.[38] The purpose of this poetical material is clear enough. First, it allows Ibn 'Asākir to settle a minor academic controversy, establishing that Abū l-Haydhām did indeed compose the verses that had been attributed to him. Second, it puts Abū l-Haydhām in possession of a cardinal virtue of the Arab warrior: poetic prowess. Finally, al-Marzubānī's extract provides a slightly more detailed precis of Abū l-Haydhām's revolt, providing the context for the revolt and for Abū l-Haydhām's capture and release.

Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Rāzī and al-Madā'inī

The next extract is the longest in the entry and the most significant.[39] It is a citation from a larger work by the historian al-Madā'inī (d. *ca.* 225/840), perhaps from his now-lost *Kitāb akhbār al-khulafā' al-kabīr* [Greater Book of Reports about the Caliphs].[40] However, Ibn 'Asākir's direct source for al-Madā'inī's extract is Abū l-Ḥusyan al-Rāzī, most likely his *Tasmiyat umarā' Dimashq*, as Conrad suggests.[41] It is this account above all that provides an in-depth view of Syrian factional fighting or *'aṣabīya* under al-Rashīd, and offers a day-by-day narrative of Abū l-Haydhām's revolt and the issues and personalities involved. It is also a carefully constructed depiction of the figure of Abū l-Haydhām through which al-Madā'inī grappled with the same problem that would confront Ibn 'Asākir: what to do with a virtuous

[38]*Ibid.*, XXVI, 63. *isnād*: Abū 'Alī Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz ← Abū l-Ḥajjāj Yūsuf ibn Makkī ibn Yūsuf *'anhu* ← Abū l-Ḥasan Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-'Atīqī ← Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Shādhān ← Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Mazyad ibn Abī l-Azhar: *anshadanā* al-Zubayr ibn Bakkār li-Abī l-Haydhām *fī akhīhi....*"

[39]*Ibid.*, XXVI, 63–80.

[40]On al-Madā'inī and his many works, see Ursula Sezgin, art. "al-Madā'inī" in *EI*², V, 946b–948b.

[41]Conrad, *Abū'l-Ḥusain al-Rāzī*, 34–35. The *isnād* of the extract is: *qara'tu bi-khaṭṭ* Abī l-Ḥusayn al-Rāzī ← Abū l-'Abbās Maḥmūd ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl ← Ḥabash ibn Mūsā ← 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Sayf al-Madā'inī. Note that the *isnād* suggests that Ibn 'Asākir probably had a text of Abū l-Ḥusayn's work before him.

rebel? Al-Madā'inī's solution was to stress Abū l-Haydhām's virtues—his *furūsīya*—and to distance him from any aspect of the rebellion that smacked of injustice while placing the blame for *fitna* squarely on others.

The most obvious component of Abū l-Haydhām's *furūsīya* is his military prowess. This is apparent throughout al-Madā'inī's account, which is essentially a blow-by-blow chronicle of the factional fighting that took place. However, the general impression of his military skills is stressed in other colorful vignettes. For example, in one episode of the fighting, Abū l-Haydhām is said to have marched out with only ten young and inexperienced warriors against a much superior force. When this fact was pointed out to him, Abū l-Haydhām dismissed the matter, saying that death was for these men a benefice and that God would assist them. As it happened, the group routed their Yamanī foes.[42] In another episode, a peace agreement between the two factions had been reached, and so Abū l-Haydhām prepared to leave Damascus and return to his home territory in the Ḥawrān: "Then he left in the early forenoon on Monday in military regalia the likes of which the people had never seen before. He also brought with him his horses and 9000 horsemen bearing [Qaysī] insignia."[43] In an anecdote appended to the larger narrative, al-Madā'inī relates how a young boy was fighting on the side of the Qaysīya, realizing his mother's worst fears. One day, he returned home wounded with a blow to the head. As his mother began to cry and wail, the boy explained: "Nothing [harmful] at all has happened to me; Abū l-Haydhām has promoted me!"[44] Clearly, to al-Madā'inī, Abū l-Haydhām was a warrior of heroic proportions.

Another virtuous trait that al-Madā'inī stresses is that of honoring oaths. Indeed, commentary on the binding power of oaths and their consequences is not limited to the figure of Abū l-Haydhām alone, but recurs throughout the narrative of his revolt.[45] On the one hand, Abū l-Haydhām is a man who keeps his word, as one would expect. His resolution in this regard is unshakeable: his oath to fight to the death forces the governor to withdraw an offending pro-Yamanī official, and convinces the Yamanīya that their only

[42] *TMD*, XXVI, 67.

[43] *Ibid.*, XXVI, 77: *thumma kharaja yawm al-ithnayn ḍaḥwatan fī 'uddatin lam yara al-nās mithlahā ma'ahu khuyūluhu ma'ahu tis'atu ālāf fāris mu'lam.*

[44] *Ibid.*, XXVI, 79.

[45] On the importance of oaths in Islamic society in another context, see Roy P. Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), esp. 41–62.

hope is to supress Abū l-Haydhām and expel the Qaysīya from Syria once and for all.[46] On the other hand, for al-Madā'inī, the willingness to break oaths and to treat them lightly is not just dishonorable but is the very source of the *fitna*. Qaysī or Yamanī, whoever breaks an oath can only bring discord. At the very beginning of his account, al-Madā'inī presents a quaint prelude to the factional conflict that engulfed Damascus. Here, a member of the Qaysī tribe of Balqayn steals a melon from a Yamanī. The Yamanī responds by gathering his kinsmen and ambushing the lone Qaysī on his way home. The cycle of violence and revenge then escalates, until eventually Damascene notables of various tribes decide to intervene. Although the tribe of Balqayn give their word to agree to arbitration, the Yamanīs decide to wait and see what their opponents will *really* do. As feared, Balqayn treacherously assemble their horses to attack the Yamanīs, but the delegation of notables prevents them from acheiving their goal. However, this first step at an agreement was permanently foiled, and the conflict was only settled after the Qaysīya admitted their wrongs to the caliph al-Rashīd himself and begged his clemency.[47]

But this seemingly embarrassing incident for the Qaysīya is really only the backdrop for the main narrative of the revolt, which is itself a chronicle of Yamanī treachery and dishonor. The whole revolt proper begins with a Yamanī official in Damascus persecuting Qaysī notables. Bad as this may seem, it is only after reading the prelude of Qaysī penitence over *'aṣabīya* before the caliph that we can appreciate the true wickedness of these acts. For not only was this persecution unwarranted, but it directly contradicted the caliph's earlier absolution of any Qaysī guilt.[48] Similarly, the unrepentant treachery of the Yamanīya and the various governors throughout this account looks all the worse when compared with the Qaysīya's earlier eloquent appeal for mercy before the caliph. For example, at one point, the governor gets Abū l-Haydhām to swear to put off fighting simply to put him off guard for a Yamanī attack.[49] Later, with the governor's consent, Yamanī soldiers decide to hunt down Abū l-Haydhām even though the fighting had ended

[46] *TMD*, XXVI, 67. Abū l-Haydhām swears literally to never remove his hand from the nose-piece of his helmet until either the official is removed, or he himself dies. In light of Abū l-Haydhām's resolve, the governor ridicules the reputation of the Yamanīya.

[47] *Ibid.*, XXVI, 64–66.

[48] The initial persecution by the official named al-Haytham ibn 'Awf (elsewhere: Ibn Ghawth) occurs on *ibid.*, XXVI, 66.

[49] *Ibid.*, XXVI, 69.

and he had dispersed his men and returned home.[50] In other episodes, the Yamanīya commit deeds like intercepting a new garrison of 'Abbāsid troops on their way to Damascus in order to convince them of Abū l-Haydhām's treason, or willfully breaking a peace agreement that had been arranged by a descendant of the pious caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, and even burning down a mosque and attributing the act to Abū l-Haydhām.[51] This sort of behavior is the very antithesis of *furūsīya*.

The tendency to take one's word lightly also leads to the demise of two of al-Madā'inī's main villains in classic statements of irony and hubris. In one, the Yamanī warrior al-'Udhāfir swears a solemn oath to taste neither food nor drink until he enters Damascus, now controlled by the Qaysīya. Al-'Udhāfir is defeated in individual combat, however, and despite the attempts of the Yamanīya and the governor's troops to save him, he is dragged into the city before Abū l-Haydhām. The Qaysī leader then scorns al-'Udhāfir, reminding him of his oath only to absolve him of it by killing him on the spot.[52] In the other such account, the new governor of Damascus, Mūsā ibn 'Īsā, treacherously sends a group of Yamanī soldiers to track down and capture Abū l-Haydhām in the Ḥawrān after the fighting has stopped. In anticipation of his triumph, Mūsā sends a letter to al-Rashīd stating that he has killed Abū l-Haydhām, and that he will soon be sending his head. Abū l-Haydhām, however, was never captured; ten days later Mūsā was withdrawn from his post.[53]

In contrast to the treacherous behavior of the Yamanīya and their willful tendency to take matters in their own hands, Abū l-Haydhām (as al-Madā'inī depicts him) appears as a reluctant rebel. When first asked to wreak revenge on the Yamanīya for a slain kinsman, Abū l-Haydhām refuses, preferring instead to refer the matter to the governor or, failing that, the caliph.[54] This respect for the authority of the caliph is stressed throughout al-Madā'inī's account, distancing Abu al-Haydhām from any accusation of disloyalty. Indeed, as mentioned, such an accusation is depicted as the sort of thing that the Yamanīya have to deceitfully convince the government troops about. At one point in the conflict, Abū l-Haydhām defiantly releases the prisoners jailed

[50] *Ibid.*, XXVI, 73.

[51] The new garrison: *ibid.*, XXVI, 75–76; the 'Umarī peacemaker: *ibid.*, XXVI, 74; the burned mosque: *ibid.*, XXVI, 73.

[52] *Ibid.*, XXVI, 73–74.

[53] *Ibid.*, XXVI, 77–78.

[54] *Ibid.*, XXVI, 66.

by the governor, making a point of releasing Qaysīs and Yamanīs alike. For, as he is made to say:[55]

> I have set free the people as a whole, without preferring anyone over another. This is an affair that I have ventured upon solely because of what is between me and the Commander of the Faithful. If he pardons me, then it will be due to his grace; if he punishes me, then let it be so.

Throughout, he is always willing to agree to peace, even though the governor or the Yamanīya are just as willing to break it in turn.

Thus, the overall weight of al-Madā'inī's account is a favorable portrayal of its protagonist, Abū l-Haydhām. For al-Madā'inī, Abū l-Haydhām emerges as a paragon of the virtues of good old-fashioned *furūsīya* and as a reluctant rebel, whose hand was forced by the divisive and irreverent ambitions of Yamanī cowards and colluding provincial governors. Yet al-Madā'inī does not end his account there. Significantly, he ends this otherwise favourable account by including a brief report that puts Abū l-Haydhām's actions into question: here, a follower urges Abū l-Haydhām not to personally lead his followers into battle as he is want. Abū l-Haydhām replies with uncharacteristic hubris: "Be quiet! For I saw Iblīs [Satan] in a dream and he put his burnoose on my head; I will certainly not be killed." In this simple put powerful final image, al-Madā'inī may have intended to show the lengths to which *furūsīya* pushed its upholders. Yet, at the same time, he has unavoidably identified Abū l-Haydhām with the archetypal Rebel himself, a ploy much in line with Ibn 'Asākir's own interpretation of events, as we shall see.

Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Rāzī and Syrian Informants

Ibn 'Asākir continues in his entry with another extract from Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Rāzī, but this time the material in the extract originates from Syrian sources.[56] Al-Rāzī is quite keen to distinguish this new account from al-Madā'inī's previous account: "That is the version (*riwāya*) of al-Madā'inī concerning the affair of Abū l-Haydhām. As for the version of the Damascenes, it has many additions to what al-Madā'inī has related." The extract itself is an amplification of certain scenes already described in al-Madā'inī's account, in particular a crucial and heroic battle at the Jābiya Gate, with

[55] *Ibid.*, XXVI, 68.

[56] *Ibid.*, XXVI, 80–84.

citations of relevant poetic verses. The precise origin of this "Damascene version" of the history of Abū l-Haydhām's revolt is never mentioned, and the text appears to be the construct of al-Rāzī himself after he had gathered information from local informants.[57] Although the level of prosopographical and topographical detail can only have come from local informants, the text was clearly written for a non-Damascene audience. This is plain from the glosses given to toponyms that would have been well-known to any Damascene audience, but also to the clear non-partisan presentation of the conflict. This is neither a straight Qaysī nor a purely Yamanī version of the revolt, but a harmonized pan-factional retelling. Thus, on the death of one Yamanī warrior named Wazīra ibn Simāk, al-Rāzī adds:[58]

> The Yamanīya claim that he merely died [trampled] in the press of the crowd and that he was not killed by force of arms. [However], the Muḍarīya [Qays] claim that a youth named Muḥammad from the Banū Layth ibn Bakr ibn Kināna of the descendants of Jaththāma ibn Qays killed him.

In al-Rāzī's "Damascene version" both sides are given equal footing, and members of both factions appear equally heroic.

The entry then continues to a selection of two poems attributed to Abū l-Haydhām about the revolt, which al-Rāzī collected from an anonymous local Murrī informant:[59]

> Among that which was said about this revolt in the way of poetry and verse is the [material] that one of the Damascenes has passed on to me from his father from his grandfather and [various] kinsmen of the tribe of the Banū Murra.

[57]This anonymous group *isnād* is a common practice of al-Rāzī's (see below). Occasionally it is clear that he is relying on written sources, as when he cites Abū l-Haydhām's death-date of AH 182: "I read in the hand-writing of one of the Damascenes (*qara'tu bi-khaṭṭi ba'ḍi ahl Dimashq*): 'and in the year one hundred eighty-two died Abū l-Haydhām....'"

[58]*TMD*, XXVI, 81. Topographical glosses: *ibid.*, XXVI, 81: "...they came to a village belonging to Yaman called Dārayyā, which is the largest village belonging to Yaman in the Ghūṭa of Damascus"; *ibid.*, XXVI, 82: "Khuraym put them to siege at Ḥarlān at the end of the day; Ḥarlān is twenty miles from Damascus."

[59]*Ibid.*, XXVI, 83: *wa-kāna mimmā qīla fī tilka al-'aṣabīya min al-ash'ār wa-l-arājīz mimmā afādanī ba'ḍu ahl Dimashq 'an abīhi 'an jaddihi wa-ahl baytihi min al-Murrīyīn.*

The first is a *fakhr* or boast of Abū l-Haydhām and his tribe at the expense of Yaman, giving a clear impression of the Qaysī interpretation of Abū l-Haydhām's actions. In similar fashion, the second poem alludes to the battle of the Jābiya Gate and the death of Wazīra ibn Simāk.[60]

All of this Syrian material thus takes al-Madā'inī's favorable portrayal of Abū l-Haydhām one step further, depicting the revolt *in its entirety* as an heroic conflict. The revolt is even described as a sequence of battles or "days" (*ayyām*), latter-day analogs of the epic "days" of the pre-Islamic tribes, and appropriately heroic poetry is marshalled to the occasion. In the Syrian—perhaps more narrowly Damascene—understanding of the revolt, neither side had a monopoly on *furūsīya*. Rather, both factions participated in an event that, whatever its moral implications, testified to the valor of all involved, and, of course, their descendants.

The Verdict of the 'Ulamā'

Until this point, the material that Ibn 'Asākir presents is similar to the sort of material that one might find in the traditional Arabic chronicles: short biographical notices, longer narratives of dramatic events, and the occasional illustrative poem. However, Ibn 'Asākir does not end his entry there, but proceeds to add material from sources other than Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Rāzī. The material so far cited presents Abū l-Haydhām so favorably that its judgement about rebellion is at best ambiguous. Ibn 'Asākir thus concludes his entry by citing material that leaves no room for doubt: rebellion in general and Abū l-Haydhām's revolt in particular were sinful. To achieve this concluding tone, Ibn'Asākir appeals to Islamic tradition and cites a number of sayings of the Prophet (*ḥadīth*, pl. *aḥādīth*) that reflect unfavorably on the revolt. First, Ibn 'Asākir refutes any notion that Abū l-Haydhām held any special status in God's design. He thus begins by presenting a *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet asks for God's mercy on Qays and praises them roundly, referring to them as the bringers of victory to true religion, God's paladins in this world, an egg from which the Prophet's family was hatched, and the lions of God. Ibn 'Asākir even adds a slight variant reading of this pro-Qays *ḥadīth* for the sake of precision. But then he adds an aside that is almost shocking in its

[60]*Ibid.*, XXVI, 83–84. Note that in Abū l-Haydhām's boast he piously claims: "Were it not for the caliph and Islām / My steed would have left no herds in the land of Banū Qaḥṭān" (*law lā al-khalīfatu wa-l-islāmu mā tarakat / khaylī bi-arḍi Banī Qaḥṭāna jawwālā*).

bluntness:[61]

> This [slight variant] is the correct one. Abū l-Haydhām was the [leading] paladin of Qays of his time, but I do not see that he has anything to do with this *ḥadīth* [i.e. the one praising Qays] because he used his *furūsīya* to fight [other] Muslims. God knows best.

In this short aside, at the end of his entry, after pages of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Rāzī's heroic accounts of the revolt, Ibn 'Asākir steps in personally to remind the reader of just where Abū l-Haydhām stands in his estimation.

Moreover, to put this pro-Qays *ḥadīth* into perspective, Ibn 'Asākir then cites versions of a *ḥadīth* that predicts the disasters that will befall Syria at the hands of Qays. In the first, Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Yamān warns 'Amr ibn Ṣulay' to be wary when he sees a Qaysī in control of Syria.[62] In a more complex version, 'Amr and his companion ask Ḥudhayfa to relate to them something "that perhaps God might make useful to us". Ḥudhayfa then warns 'Amr as in the first tradition, but precedes his warning with a *ḥadīth* from the Prophet in which Qays (or Muḍar) are condemned as a tribe that will continue to kill, destroy, and annihilate the righteous until they themselves are eradicated by troops sent by God. A third variant follows.[63]

[61] *Ibid.*, XXVI, 85. The first version is related with two *isnāds*, both from Ibn Manda (d. 395/1005; on him, see F. Rosenthal, art. "Ibn Manda" in *EI* [2]), III, 863b. The first runs: Abū l-Fatḥ Yūsuf ibn 'Abd al-Wāḥid ← Shujjā' ibn 'Alī ← Abū 'Abd Allāh ibn Manda ← Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Abī Ḥāmid al-Bukhārī ← Isma'īl ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Kathīr. The second runs Ibn Manda ← Muḥammad ibn 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Abī Rajā' at Mecca ← Mūsā ibn Hārūn. From these two different points, Ibn Manda's *aḥādīth* both share the same *isnād*: Qutayba ibn Sa'd ← 'Abd al-Mu'min ibn 'Abd Allāh Abū l-Ḥasan ← 'Abd Allāh ibn Khālid al-'Ansī ← 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muqarrin al-Mazanī ← Ghālib ibn Abjar. The second version has only two variant words, and is related through al-Ṭabarānī from Mūsā ibn Hārūn.

[62] *Ibid. isnād*: Abū l-Barakāt al-Anmāṭī ← Abū l-Faḍl ibn Khayrūn ← 'Abd al-Malik ibn Muḥammad ← Abū 'Alī ibn al-Ṣawwāf ← Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān ibn Abī Shayba ← his father ← 'Abd Allāh ibn Idrīs and Jarīr ← Yazīd ibn Abī Ziyād ← Shaqīq.

[63] *Ibid.*, XXVI, 85–86. *Isnād* of complex version: Abū Sahl Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Sa'dawayh ← 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥasan ← Ja'far ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Ya'qūb ← Muḥammad ibn Hārūn al-Rūyānī ← Muḥammad ibn Bashshār and 'Amr ibn 'Alī ← Ibn Abī 'Adī ← Hishām ← Qatāda ← Abū Ṭufayl.

Isnād of third variant: Abū l-Barakāt al-Anmāṭī ← Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad ← Abū 'Alī ibn Shādhān ← Abū Sahl ibn Ziyād al-Qaṭṭān ← Abū l-Ḥusayn 'Alī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Wāsiṭī ← Muḥammad ibn Abī Nu'aym ← Rib'ī ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Jārūd ← Sayf ibn Wahb the *mawlā* of the Banū Taym ← Abū Ṭufayl.

Finally, prior to the report of the subject's death-date that concludes most of his entries, Ibn 'Asākir adds one last report bearing on Abū l-Haydhām. In this report, it is related that a certain man once saw Abū l-Haydhām in a dream sleeping in the red velvet robes of Pharaoh.[64] Two interpretations of this dream were given: one group said that it suggested that this man would one day rule Egypt; another group said that it meant that he would go to Hell. According to this account, the early *muḥaddith* and pious figure Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179/795) supported the latter interpretation. By way of explanation, the author of the account adds: "Abū l-Haydhām was a man from Syria who was a leader during the troubles (*al-fitan*)."

Conclusion

This analysis of Ibn 'Asākir's entry for Abū l-Haydhām al-Murrī suggests a number of conclusions regarding Ibn 'Asākir's method and his vision of early Islamic history. First, and most obviously, Ibn 'Asākir relied in this entry on a variety of sources of different provenance and original intent, including poetic material, historical narratives, local sources, and *aḥādīth*. None of this material appears to have been edited in any significant way, so one might be inclined to see Ibn 'Asākir as a mere transmitter of earlier materials. In particular, the entry is dominated by one account—that of al-Madā'inī. A superficial reading of this entry might give the impression that Ibn 'Asākir shares al-Madā'inī's interpretation of the revolt of Abū l-Haydhām, given its looming size in relation to the other materials in the entry. In a certain sense, this appears to be true: Ibn 'Asākir appears not to have objected to al-Madā'inī's detailed narrative of the revolt, or to its general depiction of Abū l-Haydhām as an 'Abbāsid-era embodiment of *furūsīya*.

However, Ibn 'Asākir was not a prisoner of his sources, and it would be inaccurate to think of him as reluctantly including material he found objectionable simply because it was all he had. On the contrary, Ibn 'Asākir was quite capable of including such material and making his opinion of it very clear, as with the pro-Qays *ḥadīth* discussed above. He does not attempt to discredit the validity of the *ḥadīth* (indeed, he even supplies a corrected version of it), but he explicitly states that it has nothing to do with the rebel Abū l-Haydhām. In a similar fashion, Ibn 'Asākir's introductory synopsis, in which the evils of the revolt are stressed, provides a blanket control

[64] *Ibid.*, XXVI, 86–87. The account comes from the renowned Mālikī scholar of Egypt, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam (d. 268/882), through Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Harawī.

over the entry that follows, lest the reader be taken in by Abū l-Haydhām's charismatic image in the sources.[65]

But explicit statements of this kind were rare and were only one of the methods that Ibn ʿAsākir employed to control his source material. Another feature of Ibn ʿAsākir's method in compiling his entry is what Fred M. Donner has called his "strategy of placement".[66] In his entry on Abū l-Haydhām, Ibn ʿAsākir is careful not to allow the reader to finish the entry with an overwhelmingly favorable impression of its subject. He does this by creating, in effect, an interpretive "envelope" for the entry as a unit. If one examines the structure of the entry as a whole, it clearly falls into two parts: a central core of earlier source materials that stress the *furūsīya* of the revolt and its protagonist, and interpretive materials on either end of this core, namely Ibn ʿAsākir's introductory matter and the concluding *aḥādīth*. In both parts of this interpretive material, Ibn ʿAsākir is explicit about his view of the sinfulness of Abū l-Haydhām's revolt. At the same time, the very placement of these two parts—the first and last passages that the reader encounters—serves to heighten the intensity of their message, while the *furūsīya* materials sandwiched within are accordingly diluted.

In structuring his entry this way, then, Ibn ʿAsākir has given the last substantial account of the entry—the account of the dream interpretation—the greatest amount of stress in the whole entry. This being so, it would repay us to return to that account. What did Ibn ʿAsākir intend by it, and why does it receive pride of place in his entry? In light of Ibn ʿAsākir's strategies of composition and the problem of depicting a rebel like Abū l-Haydhām, it now seems clear that, for Ibn ʿAsākir, the account of the dream was symbolic of the ambiguities of the figure of Abū l-Haydhām. Indeed, the account nicely sums up the interpretive dilemma that the reader faced in this entry: is Abū l-Haydhām a hero or a villain? Does the man's dream indicate that he will one day rule Egypt as Abū l-Haydhām once ruled Damascus? Or does it indicate that he will win only damnation, the fitting end of rebels and Pharaohs? Ibn ʿAsākir accords this account pride of place because it provides an answer to this dilemma, supported by the authority of Mālik,

[65]In this regard, *pace* Thierry Bianquis, Ibn ʿAsākir's image of Abū l-Haydhām is hardly one of a cookie-cutter cavalier, nor is his entry any *more* stereotyped than those of any other group, such as the *ʿulamāʾ*. Cf. his "L'ânier de village, le chevalier de la steppe, le cavalier de la citadelle: Trois personnages de la transition en Syrie," in al-Bakhit and Schick, eds., *Bilād al-Shām During the ʿAbbāsid Period*, 91–104, esp. 97–100.

[66]See Fred Donner's contribution to this volume, 52–57 above.

and, perhaps, the *ʿulamāʾ* by extension: Abū l-Haydhām, no matter how heroic he was, and how much he embodied *furūsīya*, was, in the end, still a rebel; Hellfire is the only reward for him and those who imitate him.

Ibn ʿAsākir's entry for Abū l-Haydhām al-Murrī thus emerges as less an exclusive account of its subject than as a discourse on the perils of rebellion in general. This distaste for *fitna* is, of course, completely in accordance with earlier Community-minded visions of Islamic "salvation history", and it appears to be a central facet of Ibn ʿAsākir's version of the same. This is largely to be expected. To begin with, a Sunnī religious scholar (*ʿālim*) like Ibn ʿAsākir would be unlikely to look with favor on anything that divided the Muslim community, especially when Muslims themselves were responsible. The evil of rebellion is a basic feature of classical Islamic politico-legal theory, invested with Satanic associations from the very beginning.[67] Moreover, the context in which Ibn ʿAsākir wrote his work may have lent a certain immediacy to such an attitude. After all, Zangid Syria was a region wracked by inter-Muslim conflict at a time when unity against a common Frankish enemy might have been desired. For Ibn ʿAsākir and his contemporaries, the story of Abū l-Haydhām was in danger of being played out again at precisely the time when political circumstances could allow no room for rebels with a cause.

However, it is important to note that Ibn ʿAsākir's disapprobation for *fitna* is not a simple *political* attitude ("rebels are bad, the caliph/sultan/governor is good"). Rather, it is a universal, *moral* attitude, in which anyone who partakes in activity that divides the community, who pits Muslim against Muslim, is held to account. In this regard, one can appreciate the inclusion of the Damascene "pan-factional" version of the revolt immediately after al-Madāʾinī's pro-Qaysī account, as well as the frequent reference to treacherous and prideful governors. No one—Qaysī or Yamanī, ruler or ruled—is to be excused from being an agent of *fitna*. Ibn ʿAsākir's is thus not a statist or dynastic vision of history, but rather a communal history in which all of the subjects of his entries played a part.

How does Ibn ʿAsākir's vision of Islamic history affect his value as a source for ʿAbbāsid history? With regard to *fitna* and rebellion, it should be clear that Ibn ʿAsākir cannot be assumed to be a neutral source, still less a passive transmitter of earlier materials. Yet, whatever his own views on

[67]On rebellion in Islamic law, see Joel L. Kraemer, "Apostates, Rebels and Brigands," *Israel Oriental Studies* 10 (1980), 34–73.

fitna, there seems no good reason to doubt Ibn 'Asākir's data on the names of the people involved in Abū l-Haydhām's revolt or the general sequence of events. This is probably true of his coverage of other events as well. In this regard, and despite its limitations, for the historian of the 'Abbāsid period *TMD* has a great deal to offer. As a source for detailed accounts of Syrian affairs shunned by earlier historians, and as an archive of 'Abbāsid-era prosopographies of the *tasmiya* type, there is much indisputable data to work with. Although it cannot claim to offer material for a "total history" of Syria under the 'Abbāsids (what one source could?), when read critically, *TMD* is especially valuable as a source of answers to questions about the often turbulent relationship between two elite strata: the local representatives of the 'Abbāsid central government, and local notables like Abū l-Haydhām.

How Ibn 'Asākir's historical scheme affected other aspects of 'Abbāsid history is still unclear, although one point seems certain: *TMD* is no more innocent of a selective vision of history than earlier products of 'Abbāsid-era salvation or imperial history. As such, local histories such as this one cannot simply be used to "fill in" the lacunae of the Iraq-oriented early Islamic narratives. Although the work provides a great deal of new and unique materials relating to 'Abbāsid history, some of it of local Syrian origin, it is not categorically "better" than any of the earlier traditional sources, and is as equally in need of critical assessment. Generally speaking, as with the early Islamic historiographical tradition, so with later historical works: only by recognizing these works as literary compositions can we appreciate the complexity of the material at hand, and only by fully understanding the artifice involved in their composition can we put the historical value of a given source in its proper perspective.

APPENDIX A
PUBLICATION HISTORY OF *TMD*

Suleiman A. Mourad

Overview

There is no medieval Arabic source whose modern publication has changed hands or has been interrupted as often as Ibn 'Asākir's *TMD*. The surviving manuscripts, though mostly well preserved, often were poorly copied. Moreover, copying styles differ not only among the various manuscripts (as one would expect), but also within the same manuscript. For example, the general consensus is that the early-eighteenth-century manuscript in the Ẓāhirīya library in Damascus—the most complete manuscript of *TMD* known to be extant—was copied by several copyists and that many diacritical marks were placed arbitrarily. Hence, some words and especially names have been rendered rather confusing, if not undecipherable. Such copying problems pose a great challenge to any scholar irrespective of his/her knowledge of the Arabic language. Not surprisingly, many would-be editors of *TMD* have been discouraged by the daunting task before them.

While there is no complete extant manuscript of *TMD*, there are three nearly complete copies. Apart from the manuscript of the Ẓāhirīya library, there is a sixteenth-century manuscript at the Aḥmad III Library in Istanbul, and an early-eighteenth-century manuscript at the Ibn Yūsuf Library in Marrakesh, Morocco. In addition, separate volumes of Ibn 'Asākir's *TMD* are found in almost every major collection of Arabic manuscripts around the world.

Ibn 'Asākir's contemporaries, especially his fellow-Syrian scholars, recognized his *TMD* as a biographical dictionary of great import. Shortly after Ibn 'Asākir's death (d. 571/1176), scholars began to append it with biographical notices of Damascene scholars who died after him. One of these appendices was begun by his son, al-Qāsim (d. 600/1203); however, it was not completed.

Other late medieval scholars made abridgements of the entire work or published selections from it. The most famous is the Damascene lexicographer Ibn Manẓūr's (d. 711/1311) *Mukhtaṣar ta'rīkh Dimashq* [Abridgement of Ibn 'Asākir's History of Damascus].[1] Unfortunately, most of these appendices, abridgements, and selections are no longer extant. In addition, later compilers of biographical dictionaries drew on Ibn 'Asākir's *TMD* extensively both as a model and a source for generations. Important Syrian examples include Ibn al-'Adīm's (d. 660/1262) *Bughyat al-ṭalab fī ta'rīkh Ḥalab* [Everything Desirable about the History of Aleppo][2] and al-Mizzī's (d. 742/1341) *Tahdhīb al-kamāl fī asmā' al-rijāl* [The Complete Compendium of the Names of Men].[3]

'Abd al-Qādir Badrān published the first edition of *TMD* between 1911–14. Unfortunately, much of *TMD* is missing from even the five volumes that he was able to complete. Badrān omitted many narrative reports and *ḥadīths* as well as Ibn 'Asākir's lengthy *isnāds* (chains of authorities) that precede nearly every narrative report and *ḥadīth* in *TMD*. In addition, he included some material not originally in *TMD*. In short, Badrān's edition is a partial and rather arbitrary abridgement rather than a critical edition of the Ẓāhirīya manuscript. His editing project was continued in 1930–32 by Aḥmad 'Ubayd, who completed an additional two volumes.

Twenty years later (1951–54), Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid started a new editing project under the patronage of al-Majma' al-'ilmī al-'arabī [The Arabic Academy of Science] in Damascus, later renamed Majma' al-lugha al-'arabīya [The Arabic Language Academy]. Al-Munajjid published the sections on the history of Damascus and its topography (vols. I–II), and then deserted the project altogether. In 1963, Muḥammad Aḥmad Dahmān published a lone volume (X: "Busr ibn Abī Arṭāt" to "Thābit ibn Aqram"). The Damascus project was revived once again in 1977 by a group of Damascene scholars under the leadership of Shukrī Fayṣal, and more recently by

[1] Ibn Manẓūr, *Mukhtaṣar ta'rīkh Dimashq li-Ibn 'Asākir*, 29 vols., ed. Rūḥīyat al-Khās and Muḥammad Muṭī' al-Ḥāfiẓ (Damascus: Dār al-fikr, 1984–91).

[2] Ibn al-'Adīm, *Bughyat al-ṭalab fī ta'rīkh Ḥalab*, 11 vols., ed. Suhayl Zakkār (Damascus: Dār al-Ba'th, 1988); *idem*, *Everything Desirable about the History of Aleppo*, facsimile ed. Fuat Sezgin (Frankfurt: Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science, 1986–90).

[3] Al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl fī asmā' al-rijāl*, ed. Bashshār 'Awwād Ma'rūf (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-risāla, 1992). According to G.H.A. Juynboll (art. "al-Mizzī" in *EI*²), al-Mizzī's *Tahdhīb* is "the first comprehensive lexicon that aims at being exhaustive, much more so than any of its predecessors".

Sukayna al-Shihābī. In 1978 the Damascus project published in one volume a Xerographic edition of the Leningrad (St. Petersburg) manuscript that includes entries missing from the Ẓāhirīya manuscript ("'Abd Allāh ibn 'Imrān" to "'Abd Allāh ibn Qays al-Ash'arī"). This Xerographic volume was later edited by Sukayna al-Shihābī in 1994 as Volume XXXVII. The Damascus project has published 25 volumes to date, with an emphasis on persons whose first names start with the letter *'ayn*. The most recent volume (XLVII) was published in 1997. All but three of these volumes (LII–LIV published in 1994 by Mu'assasat al-risāla in Beirut) have been published by Majma' al-lugha al-'arabīya in Damascus.

In response to the rather incremental progress made by the Damascus project, a complete Xerographic edition of the Ẓāhirīya manuscript—with some excerpts from other manuscripts to cover some of the lacunae in it—was published in Amman by Dār al-bashīr in the late-1980s. The Xerographic edition made the text of *TMD* available for the first time to modern scholars all over the world, and consequently raised the interest in and therefore the number of studies about Ibn 'Asākir and his *TMD*. In addition to the Xerographic edition and the efforts of the Damascus project, nine selections from *TMD* were published independently. Four of these treat Ibn 'Asākir's biographies of five Shī'ī imāms: 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661); Ḥasan ibn 'Alī (d. 49/669); Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī (d. 61/680); 'Alī Zayn al-'Ābidīn (d. 94/714); and Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 113/731). Three selections treat Ibn 'Asākir's biographies of Abū Hurayra (d. *ca.* 58/678), al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742) and Jesus. And two treat Ibn 'Asākir's biographies of the governors of Damascus during the Seljuk period, and those of the members of the Umayyad dynasty.

Between 1995 and 2001 'Umar al-'Amrawī of Saudi Arabia and 'Alī Shīrī of Lebanon published a new complete edition of *TMD* with Dār al-fikr in 80 volumes, bringing to an end the nearly century-long contest to see who would be the first to edit this valuable source in its entirety. One should note, however, that in their eagerness to finish the work so quickly the editors have forsaken the basic editing practice of rigorously comparing the numerous extant manuscripts of *TMD* for variant readings. Moreover, there are some words, lines, and even a few biographical notices that are missing from the Dār al-fikr edition, but that appear in the original manuscript(s). In this respect, this edition does not meet the high editorial standards that for the most part characterize the edited volumes of the Damascus project. Moreover, the indices (vols. 75–80) are poorly executed; for example, there are more than 50 entries for Abū Ghālib Aḥmad ibn Bannā. Nevertheless,

the Dār al-fikr edition of *TMD* should now make the work far more accessible to scholars than heretofore possible. It is also this edition that comprises the basis for a recent publication of the text on CD-Rom. Recently, a second full edition of *TMD* was also published in Beirut by Dār al-turāth al-ʻarabī (2001). It is edited by ʻAlī ʻĀshūr in 40 volumes (76 volumes in 40), based on the Ẓāhirīya manuscript and the edited volumes.

Apart from translations of brief excerpts in scholarly articles and monographs, there is only one translation of a extensive portion of *TMD* into a European language: the late Nikita Elisséeff's translation of Ibn ʻAsākir's introductory section on the topography of Damascus, *La description de Damas d'Ibn ʻAsakir* (Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1959).

Published Editions of *TMD*

The following list chronicles the publication history—the different editions, abridgement, selections, Xerographic editions and translation—of *TMD* in modern times. Some of the Damascus project volumes were not given volume numbers by their respective editors. Therefore, for the purpose of clarity, a volume number referring to where each volume fits in the Damascus project is substituted and placed between square brackets.

THE DAMASCUS PROJECT

Vols. I–II, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid. Damascus: al-Majmaʻ al-ʻilmī al-ʻarabī, 1951–54. The sections on the history and topography of Damascus.

[Vols. III–IV], ed. Nashāṭ Ghazzāwī. Damascus: Majmaʻ al-lugha al-ʻarabīya, 1984–91. *Al-Sīra al-nabawīya* (the life of the Prophet).

Vol. VII, ed. ʻAbd al-Ghanī al-Duqr. Damascus: Majmaʻ al-lugha al-ʻarabīya, 1984. Aḥmad ibn ʻUtba to Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Mu'ammal.

Vol. X, ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad Dahmān. Damascus: Majmaʻ al-lugha al-ʻarabīya, 1963. Busr ibn Abī Arṭāt to Thābit ibn Aqram.

[Vol. XXXI], ed. Shukrī Fayṣal. Damascus: Majmaʻ al-lugha al-ʻarabīya, 1977. ʻĀṣim to ʻĀyid.

[Vol. XXXII], ed. Shukrī Fayṣal, Rūḥīya al-Naḥḥās, and Riyāḍ ʻAbd al-Ḥamīd Murād. Damascus: Majmaʻ al-lugha al-ʻarabīya, 1982. ʻUbāda ibn Awfā to ʻAbd Allāh ibn Thuwab.

[Vol. XXXIII], ed. Muṭāʻ al-Ṭarābīshī and Sukayna al-Shihābī. Damascus: Majmaʻ al-lugha al-ʻarabīya, 1981. ʻAbd Allāh ibn Jābir to ʻAbd Allāh ibn Zayd.

Vol. XXXIV, ed. Muṭāʻ al-Ṭarābīshī. Damascus: Majmaʻ al-lugha al-ʻarabīya, 1986. ʻAbd Allāh ibn Sālim to ʻAbd Allāh ibn Abī ʻĀ'isha.

Vol. XXXVII, ed. Sukayna al-Shihābī. Damascus: Majmaʻ al-lugha al-ʻarabīya, 1994. ʻAbd Allāh ibn ʻImrān to ʻAbd Allāh ibn Qays.

Vol. XXXVIII, ed. Sukayna al-Shihābī. Damascus: Majmaʻ al-lugha al-ʻarabīya, 1986. ʻAbd Allāh ibn Qays to ʻAbd Allāh ibn Masʻada.

Vol. XXXIX, ed. Sukayna al-Shihābī. Damascus: Majmaʻ al-lugha al-ʻarabīya, 1986. ʻAbd Allāh ibn Masʻūd to ʻAbd al-Ḥamīd ibn Bakkār.

Vol. XL, ed. Sukayna al-Shihābī. Damascus: Majmaʻ al-lugha al-ʻarabīya, 1986. ʻAbd al-Ḥamīd ibn Ḥabīb to ʻAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʻAbd Allāh.

Vol. XLI, ed. Sukayna al-Shihābī. Damascus: Majmaʻ al-lugha al-ʻarabīya, 1991. ʻAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʻAbd Allāh ibn al-Ḥasan to ʻAbd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Miswar ibn Makhrama.

Vol. XLII, ed. Sukayna al-Shihābī. Damascus: Majmaʻ al-lugha al-ʻarabīya, 1992. ʻAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Maṣād to ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz ibn ʻUmar ibn ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz.

Vol. XLIII, ed. Sukayna al-Shihābī. Damascus: Majmaʻ al-lugha al-ʻarabīya, 1993. ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz ibn ʻUmayr to ʻAbd al-Wāḥid ibn Zayd al-Baṣrī.

Vol. XLIV, ed. Sukayna al-Shihābī. Damascus: Majmaʻ al-lugha al-ʻarabīya, 1994. ʻAbd al-Wāḥid ibn Saʻīd to ʻUbayda ibn Ashʻab.

Vol. XLV, ed. Sukayna al-Shihābī. Damascus: Majmaʻ al-lugha al-ʻarabīya, 1996. ʻUbayda ibn ʻAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥakīm to ʻUthmān ibn ʻAṭā' ibn Maysara.

[Vol. XLVI], ed. Sukayna al-Shihābī. Damascus: Majmaʻ al-lugha al-ʻarabīya, 1984. ʻUthmān ibn ʻAffān.

Vol. XLVII, ed. Sukayna al-Shihābī. Damascus: Majmaʻ al-lugha al-ʻarabīya, 1997. ʻUthmān ibn ʻAlī to ʻUthmān ibn ʻAlī ibn Abī Rabāḥ.

Vols. LII–LIII, ed. Sukayna al-Shihābī. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-risāla, 1994. ʻUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb.

Vol. LIV, ed. Sukayna al-Shihābī. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-risāla, 1994. ʻUmar ibn Khayrān to ʻAmr ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ.

[Vol. LXXX], ed. Sukayna al-Shihābī. Damascus: Majma' al-lugha al-'arabīya, 1982. *Tarājim al-nisā'* (biographies of women).

Beirut Editions

Vols. I–LXXX, ed. 'Umar ibn Gharāma al-'Amrawī and 'Alī Shīrī. Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1995–2001. Complete edition. This edition has also been published in a fully searchable CD-Rom format by Dār al-turāth in Amman.

Vols. I–XL (76 vols. in 40), ed. 'Alī 'Āshūr. Beirut: Dār iḥyā' al-turāth al-'arabī, 2001.

Abridgement

Tahdhīb ta'rīkh Dimashq, vols. I–V, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Badrān. Damascus: Maṭba'at rawḍat al-Shām, 1911–14.

Vols. VI–VII, ed. Aḥmad 'Ubayd. Damascus: al-Maktaba al-'arabīya, 1930–32. Vol. 7 ends with the biography of 'Abd Allāh ibn Sayyār.

Selections

Wulāt Dimashq fī l-'ahd al-saljūqī: nuṣūṣ mustakhraja min Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid. Damascus: Maṭba'at al-sharqī, 1949. Biographies of all governors of Damascus.

Mu'jam banī Umayya, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid. Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-jadīd, 1970. Biographies of all Umayyads, with some additions from outside *TMD*.

Tarjamat al-imām 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib min Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq, ed. Muḥammad Bāqir al-Maḥmūdī. 1st ed. Beirut: Dār al-ta'āruf, 1975; 2nd ed. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Maḥmūdī, 1978–80. 3 vols. 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, d. 40/661.

Tarjamat al-sibṭ al-akbar rayḥānat Rasūl Allāh wa-aḥad sayyidī shabāb ahl al-janna al-imām al-Ḥasan min Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq, ed. Muḥammad Bāqir al-Maḥmūdī. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Maḥmūdī, 1980. Al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī, d. 49/669.

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Tarjamat al-imām Zayn al-'Ābidīn 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn wa-talīhā tarjamat ibn al-imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir min Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq, ed. Muḥammad Bāqir al-Maḥmūdī. Qumm: Majma' iḥyā' al-thaqāfa al-islāmīya, 1993. 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn, d. 94/712, and Muḥammad al-Bāqir, d. 113/731.

Sīrat al-sayyid al-Masīḥ li-Ibn 'Asākir al-Dimashqī, ed. Suleiman A. Mourad. Amman: Dār al-shurūq, 1996. Jesus.

Abū Hurayra 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ṣakhr al-Dūsī, ed. Yāsīn Maḥmūd al-Khaṭīb. Beirut: Dār ṣādir, 1998. Abū Hurayra, d. *ca.* 58/678.

Xerographic Editions

The Leningrad manuscript. Damascus: Majma' al-lugha al-'arabīya, 1978. 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Imrān to 'Abd Allāh ibn Qays al-Ash'arī.

The Ẓāhirīya manuscript with excerpts from other manuscripts. 19 vols. Amman: Dār al-bashīr, n.d.

Translation

La description de Damas d'Ibn 'Asakir, trans. Nikita Elisséeff. Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1959.

APPENDIX B
STUDIES ADDRESSING *TMD*

THE CONTRIBUTORS to this volume have sought to bring together in one place a listing of secondary scholarship, which draws to a significant degree on *TMD*. We have endeavored to make this list as broad as possible. Understandably, we do not pretend that this is an exhaustive list of all works which make use of Ibn ʿAsākir's *TMD*. Our apologies for any oversights.

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APPENDIX C
MAJOR LACUNAE IN *TMD*

IBN 'ASĀKIR BEGINS the biographical portion of his *TMD* with his biography of the Prophet Muḥammad, listing him under one of his other appellations, Aḥmad. Muḥammad is followed by the other Aḥmads, after which Ibn 'Asākir orders his biographies alphabetically, beginning with the name Abān. One of the more unfortunate lacunae in the manuscripts that have come down to us directly follows the biography of the Prophet. The next Aḥmad we have is a certain Aḥmad ibn 'Uṭba (d. 369/979). Thus, we have no record of men named Aḥmad whose fathers' names began with any of the letters preceding the letter *'ayn*, several of which are among the most common names in the Arabic language. Missing are names such as Aḥmad; the prophetic names Ibrāhīm (Abraham), Isḥāq (Isaac) and Ismā'īl (Ishmael); the names of the Prophet's two grandsons al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn; the very common 'Abd Allāh, 'Abd al-Raḥmān, 'Abd al-'Azīz, etc. and some of the most common Umayyad-period names such as Abān, Bishr and Umayya. Even with such common names of fathers missing, we still have 333 biographies of men named Aḥmad. One can only imagine how many more biographies we would have had we access to the full complement of Aḥmads—possibly another full volume's worth. In fact, Ibn Manẓūr includes 203 Aḥmads before Aḥmad ibn 'Uṭba in his *Mukhtaṣar*.[1]

Other unfortunate lacunae appear as well. The last Ismā'īl in Volume II of the Ẓāhirīya manuscript is Ismā'īl ibn 'Ayyāsh.[2] The first entry and only Ismā'īl in Volume III of the Ẓāhirīya manuscript is Ismā'īl al-Asadī, a poet who was patronized by the Umayyad dynasty.[3] Clearly we are missing a great many Ismā'īls—all those whose fathers' names begin with letters after the letter *'ayn*; e.g., Muḥammad, to mention only the overwhelmingly most

[1] Ibn Manẓūr, *Mukhtaṣar*, III, 5–167.
[2] *TMD*, IX, 35–50.
[3] *Ibid.*, IX, 50–51. Ibn Manẓūr includes no Ismā'īls after Ismā'īl al-Asadī.

popular name in the Arabic language. We are also lacking any record of men named Jaʿfar, the name of the sixth Shīʿī imām;[4] and we only have eight biographies of men whose names begin with the letter *hā'*—1 Hābil (Abel); 1 Hādī; and 6 Hārūns (Aarons), none of whom is Moses' brother.[5] Hence, we are missing biographies of men with three fairly common names—Hāshim, Hibat Allah, and Hishām (including the Umayyad caliph, Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Malik [r. 105–25/724–43]).[6] Under the letter *yā'* we are missing three important and common prophetic names—Yaʿqūb (Jacob), Yūsuf (Joseph), and Yūnus (Jonah).[7] The important prophetic biographies of Isḥāq and Ismāʿīl are missing as well.[8] And as noted by Steven C. Judd above, the biographies of several Umayyad caliphs are missing—Sulaymān ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 96–99/715–17), Yazīd (III) ibn al-Walīd (I) ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 126/744), and the crucially important biography of Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 105–25/724–43).[9]

The presence of these accidental lacunae presents two important questions for anyone working with Ibn ʿAsākir's *TMD*: 1) What proportion of the total compilation do these lacunae represent? 2) Do these lacunae affect the overall representativeness of Ibn ʿAsākir's material? The above-mentioned lacunae in fact represent only a small portion of the whole. One really cannot know exactly how many biographies are missing. A conservative guess (and I stress that this is nothing more than a guess) would be that we may be missing somewhere in the neighborhood of 600–800 individual biographies. Since we do have a total of 10,226 biographies, one would be hard pressed to say that their absence truly does affect the representativeness of Ibn ʿAsākir's material, especially if one's objective is to draw broad conclusions about the character of Ibn ʿAsākir's text itself and his reasons for compiling it. On the other hand, as scholars begin to pursue some of the individual scholarly and

[4]Ibn Manẓūr (*Mukhtaṣar*, VI, 51–107) includes 44 Jaʿfars.

[5]*TMD*, LXIV, 3–15.

[6]Ibn Manẓūr does not include any Hādīs. However, he does include Hābil (Abel) and five of the six Hārūns in *TMD* as well as another 93 biographies under the letter *hā'*. See Ibn Manẓūr, *Mukhtaṣar*, XXVI, 405–12; XXVII, 5–197.

[7]Ibn Manẓūr includes 240 biographies under the letter *yā'*, including 20 Yaʿqūbs (Jacob), 28 Yūsufs (Joseph), and 10 Yūnuses (Jonah). See Ibn Manẓūr, *Mukhtaṣar*, XXVII, 198–397; XXVIII, 9–122.

[8]Ibn ʿAsākir includes biographies for their father Ibrāhīm and their respective mothers Sāra and Hājar as well as for a host of other pre-Islamic sacred figures. Hence, I suspect that Ibn ʿAsākir had originally included biographies for them in his *TMD*.

[9]See Judd's contribution to this volume, 81–82 above.

family networks and genealogies of Damascene scholars, we will inevitably be frustrated to find that certain individuals' biographies are missing from the text. Clearly the most notable lacuna for the purpose of examining scholarly networks in Damascus as well as Ibn ʿAsākir's sources is the missing biography of his mentor and one of his most important authorities, Hibat Allāh Abū Muḥammad ibn al-Akfānī (d. 523/1129).[10]

[10]Ibn Manẓūr does include an entry for Ibn al-Akfānī (*Mukhtaṣar*, XXVII, 65), but he records little more that his name and birth and death dates.

APPENDIX D
PRE-ISLAMIC SACRED BIOGRAPHIES IN *TMD*

IBN 'ASĀKIR RECORDS biographies for many, though not all, of the sacred figures in the *qiṣās al-anbiyā'* tradition, 43 of which are listed below. Ibn 'Asākir records biographies for 29 of these; another three can be found in Ibn Manẓūr's *Mukhtaṣar*. The remaining eleven are neither in *TMD* nor Ibn Manẓūr. Citations for *TMD* are included when available. The Ibn Manẓūr citation is given for the three that are found in Ibn Manẓūr but not *TMD*.

Pre-Islamic Sacred Men

'Ād: neither in *TMD* nor Ibn Manẓūr.

Adam: *TMD*, VII, 373–459.

Alyasa' (Elisha): neither in *TMD* nor Ibn Manẓūr.

Ayyūb (Job): *TMD*, X, 58–83.

Āzar (Ezer, Abraham's father): neither in *TMD* nor Ibn Manẓūr.

Bal'am (Balaam): *TMD*, X, 396–406.

Dawūd (David): *TMD*, XVII, 80–109.

Dhū l-Kifl (identified with Bishr ibn Ayyūb): *TMD*, XVII, 370–81.

Dhū l-Nūn (identified with Jonah): neither in *TMD* nor Ibn Manẓūr.

Dhū l-Qarnayn (Alexander the Great): *TMD*, XVII, 330–61.

Hābil (Abel): *TMD*, LXIV, 3–9.

Hārūn (Aaron): neither in *TMD* nor Ibn Manẓūr.

Hūd: not in *TMD*; Ibn Manẓūr, XXVII, 146–57.

Ibrāhīm (Abraham): *TMD*, VI, 164–258.

Idrīs: neither in *TMD* nor Ibn Manẓūr.

Ilyas (Elijah): *TMD*, IX, 205–17.

Irmīyā (Jeremiah): *TMD*, VIII, 27–41.

'Īsa (Jesus): *TMD*, XLVII, 347–524.

Isḥāq (Isaac): neither in *TMD* nor Ibn Manẓūr.

Ismā'īl (Ishmael): neither in *TMD* nor Ibn Manẓūr.

al-Khiḍr: *TMD*, XVI, 399–434.

Lūṭ (Lot): *TMD*, L, 306–27.

Muḥammad: *TMD*, III, 3–518; IV, 3–394.

Mūsā (Moses): *TMD*, LVI, 15–186.

Nimrūd (Nimrod): neither in *TMD* nor Ibn Manẓūr.

Nūḥ (Noah): *TMD*, LXII, 40–288.

Qābil (Cain): *TMD*, XLIX, 34–50.

Ṣāliḥ: neither in *TMD* nor Ibn Manẓūr.

Samwil (Samuel): neither in *TMD* nor Ibn Manẓūr.

Shīth (Seth): *TMD*, XXIII, 268–81.

Shu'ayb: neither in *TMD* nor Ibn Manẓūr.

Sulaymān (Solomon): *TMD*, XXII, 230–99.

Ṭalūt (Saul): *TMD*, XXIV, 436–44.

Thamūd: neither in *TMD* nor Ibn Manẓūr.

'Uzayr (Ezra): *TMD*, XL, 317–38.

Ya'qub (Jacob): neither in *TMD* nor Ibn Manẓūr.

Yaḥyā (John the Baptist): *TMD*, LXIV, 168–218.

Yunus (Jonah): not in *TMD*; Ibn Manẓūr, XXVIII, 105–16.

Yushi' (Joshua): not in *TMD*; Ibn Manẓūr, XXVIII, 95–102.

Yūsuf (Joseph): neither in *TMD* nor Ibn Manẓūr.

Zakarīyā (Zechariah): *TMD*, IX, 48–56.

Pre-Islamic Sacred Women

Bilqīs (Queen of Sheba): *TMD*, LXIX, 67–78; not in *Tarājim al-nisā'*.

Hājar (Hagar, mother of Ishmael): *TMD*, LXX, 144–45; *Tarājim al-nisā'*, 315–17.

Ḥawā' (Eve): *TMD*, LXIX, 101–11; not in *Tarājim al-nisā'*.

Maryam (Mary, mother of Jesus): *TMD*, LXX, 75–122; *Tarājim al-nisā'*, 343–87.

Raḥma (Job's wife): *TMD*, LXIX, 120–28; not in *Tarājim al-nisā'*.

Sāra (Sarah, Abraham's wife): *TMD*, LXIX, 180–90; *Tarājim al-nisā'*, 127–37.

APPENDIX E
MUḤAMMAD, THE RĀSHIDŪN, AND THE UMAYYAD CALIPHS IN *TMD*

IBN 'ASĀKIR'S TREATMENT of Muḥammad, the Rāshidūn, and certain of the Umayyad caliphs constitute his lengthiest biographies. His biography of Muḥammad is understandably the lengthiest and constitutes the entirety of Volumes III and IV of the Beirut edition.

Muḥammad (*ca.* AD 570–632): *TMD*, III, 3–518; IV, 3–394.

The Rāshidūn Caliphs

Ibn 'Asākir's biographies of the Rāshidūn caliphs are the lengthiest biographies after that of Muḥammad. Each constitutes one volume in the Beirut edition.

Abū Bakr al-Ṣiḍḍīq (r. 11–13/632–34): *TMD*, XXX, 3–461.

'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 13–23/634–44): *TMD*, XLIV, 3–483.

'Uthmān ibn 'Affān (r. 23–35/644–56): *TMD*, XXXIX, 3–544.

'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (r. 35–40/656–661): *TMD*, XLII, 3–589.

The Umayyad Caliphs

Biographies for three Umayyad caliphs are missing from Ẓāhirīya manuscript on which the Beirut edition is based. Entries for two of these—Sulaymān ibn 'Abd al-Malik (r. 96–99/715–17) and Hishām ibn 'Abd al-Malik (r. 105–25/724–43)—can be found in Ibn Manẓūr's *Muktaṣar*. The third—Yazīd (III) ibn al-Walīd (I) ibn 'Abd al-Malik (r. 126/744)—is in neither *TMD* nor Ibn Manẓūr.

Mu‘āwiya (I) ibn Abī Sufyān (r. 41–60/661–81): *TMD*, LIX, 55–221.

Yazīd (I) ibn Mu‘āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān (r. 60–64/681–83): *TMD*, LXV, 394–410.

Mu‘āwiya (II) ibn Yazīd ibn Mu‘āwiya (r. 64/683–84): *TMD*, LIX, 296–305.

Marwān (I) ibn al-Ḥakam ibn Abī al-‘Āṣ (r. 64–65/684–85): *TMD*, LVII, 224–80.

‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān (r. 65–86/685–705): *TMD*, XXXVI, 110–67.

al-Walīd (I) ibn ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 86–96/705–15): *TMD*, LXIII, 164–87.

Sulaymān ibn ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 96–99/715–17): not in *TMD*; Ibn Manẓūr, X, 170–82.

‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Marwān (r. 99–101/717–20): *TMD*, XLV, 126–274.

Yazīd (II) ibn ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 101–105/720–24): *TMD*, XVIII, 337–44.

Hishām ibn ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 105–25/724–43): not in *TMD*; Ibn Manẓūr, XXVII, 97–105.

al-Walīd (II) ibn Yazīd (II) ibn ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 125–26/743–44): *TMD*, LXIII, 319–49.

Yazīd (III) ibn al-Walīd (I) ibn ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 126/744); neither in *TMD* nor Ibn Manẓūr.

Ibrāhīm ibn al-Walīd (I) ibn ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 126/744): *TMD*, VII, 246–52.

Marwān (II) ibn Muḥammad ibn Marwān (r. 127–32/744–50): *TMD*, LVII, 319–47.

‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Mu‘āwiya ibn Hishām (r. 138–72/756–88) (Spain): *TMD*, XXXV, 445–55.

General Index

In the arrangement adopted here, the Arabic definite article (*al-*) at the beginning of an entry, the transliteration symbols for the Arabic letters *hamza* (’) and *‘ayn* (‘), and distinctions between different letters transliterated by the same Latin character (e.g. *d* and *ḍ*) are ignored for purposes of alphabetization.

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